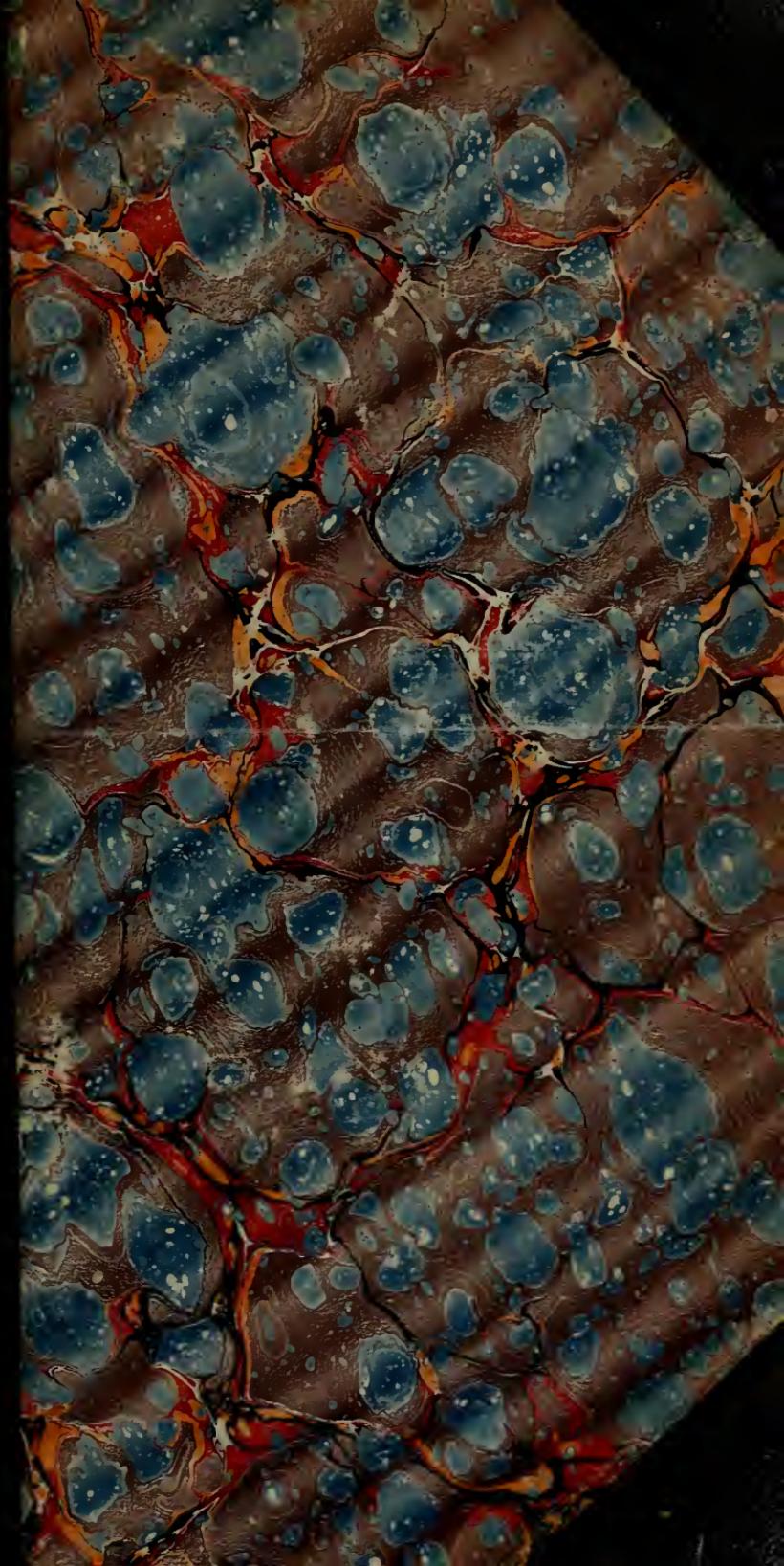




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REFORMS

AND

REFORMERS.

By W. B. Stanton.



LONDON:
T. NELSON AND SONS, PATERNOSTER ROW:
AND EDINBURGH.

MDCCCLIII.

REFORMS
AND
REFORMERS OF ENGLAND.

BY H. B. STANTON.



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MDCCCLIII.

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P R E F A C E.

THE following Work, containing a succinct narrative of the Rise and Progress of Political Reform in England, with Biographical Sketches of the leading Reformers by whose zealous and patriotic labours it was carried on, and finally brought to a triumphant issue, is from the pen of Mr. H. B. Staunton, an American writer, who resided for some time in England. Written as Mr. Staunton's Work was, for American readers, and by one who made his own country's institutions the standard of excellence, it was, in its original state, unsuited for publication in this country, notwithstanding the intelligence, ability, and candour which generally characterized the Author's treatment of his subject. It has accordingly been carefully revised. Some of the Biographical Sketches have been corrected and enlarged, and others of them almost entirely re-written; the statistical and financial facts have been carefully corrected and brought down to the latest dates, and the whole Work has been remodelled in style, so as to render it an agreeable, as well as a trustworthy textbook, for all to whom a concise and comprehensive

narrative of the great political events of the nineteenth century may prove an acceptable addition to our popular literature.

As now revised and extended, the “Reforms and Reformers of England” will be found to fulfil all the promises of its title: conveying to the reader an intelligent view of the leading incidents which mark the progress of Political Reform in England, from the first struggles and sufferings of its originators towards the close of the eighteenth century, to the final attainment of their purpose in 1832, and of such fruits as have since resulted from this great constitutional change; along with accurate Biographical Notices of the distinguished men who have won for themselves the honourable title of the Reformers of England.

One omission requires to be noticed here, which escaped the Editor of the present edition. Mr. Wallace of Kelly, the late member for Greenock, was the original champion of Postal Reform, and should have been mentioned as such along with Mr. Rowland Hill, who has himself done full justice to Mr. Wallace’s early labours. On page 218, also, Colonel Thompson has been named by Mr. Staunton as the colleague of Dr. Bowring, in the first proceedings for abolishing the Corn Laws, instead of Mr. Archibald Prentice, who presided at the original Manchester Meeting.

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REFORMS AND REFORMERS OF ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

Introductory—The “Condition of England” Question.

THE people of England and of the United States must ever be mutually interested in the history of their respective countries. They possess a common origin, and an identity of language ; and draw the leading principles of their civil institutions from the same sources. They read the same historic pages, and while recounting the words and deeds of orators and statesmen, or the achievements of patriots who have filled the world with their fame, they admire a common ancestry. The instructors of both nations teach the youth to cherish the wisdom of Alfred, the deductions of Bacon, the discoveries of Newton, the philosophy of Locke, the drama of Shakspeare, and the poetry of Milton, as the heir-looms of the whole Anglo-Saxon family. The ties of blood and lineage are strengthened by those of monetary interest and reciprocal trade ; while the channels of social intercourse are kept open by the tides of emigration which flow unceasingly between them.

Nor, when viewed in less attractive aspects, can the condition and policy of England be indifferent to America. Whitening the ocean with the sails of her commerce, she sends her traders wherever the marts of men teem with traffic. Belting the earth with her colonies, dotting its sur-

face with her forts, anchoring her navies in all its harbours, she rules in her dependencies one hundred and sixty millions of men, giving law not only to cultivated and refined states, but to stunted and hardy clans that shiver and freeze among the ices of the polar regions, and to swarthy and languid myriads that repose in the orange groves, or pant on the shrubless sands of the tropics. She has for a century and a half largely participated in nearly all the wars of Europe, Asia, and Africa, while by her diplomacy, or gold, she has shaped the policy of the combatants to the promotion of her desired ends. Ancient Rome, whose name is the synonym of resistless power and boundless conquest, could not, in the palmy days of her Cæsars, vie with Great Britain in the extent of her possessions and the strength of her resources. Half a century ago, England's great statesman, sketching the resources of her territory, spoke of her king, "on whose dominions the sun never sets." An American orator unfolded the same idea in language characteristic of the eloquence of his countrymen, when he spoke of her as "that Power, whose morning drum-beat, following the sun, and keeping company with the hours, encircles the earth daily with one continuous and unbroken strain of the martial airs of England."

Britain, once a land of savage pagans, was, long subsequent to the Norman Conquest, the abode of ignorance, superstition, and despotism. And though for centuries past she has witnessed a steady advance in knowledge and civil and religious liberty—though her men of letters have sent down to their posterity works that shall live till science, philosophy, and poetry are known no more—though her lawyers have gradually worn off the rugged features of the feudal system, till the common law of England has been adopted as the basis of the republican code of America—though her Church long since yielded to the attacks of non-conformity, and sanctioned a liberal toleration—though all that was vital and dangerous in the maxim, "The king can do no wrong," fell with the head of Charles I. in 1649—yet it is only within the last fifty years that she has sanc-

tioned the changes on her institutions long counselled by a class of innovators, designated as "REFORMERS."

Humanity might at times have been tempted to despair, when contemplating the condition of the depressed classes in Great Britain and Ireland. But philanthropy finds abundant sources of hope in studying the character of recent movements. The past half century has seen an uprising, not of the middle class only, but of all the classes of society, in a peaceful struggle for inherent rights. No force has been employed except reason and public opinion, and the result has been eminently successful. The "middle class" (and the term has great significance in England) discovered its strength during the Great Revolution under Hampden and Cromwell, and received an impulse then which it has never lost. The nobility and gentry did at times seek to silence popular clamour by admitting its leaders to the rank and privileges of "the higher orders." Still, concessions were made to the mass of the people, which stimulated them to demand, and strengthened them to obtain more. But a truth, destined to be all-potent in the nineteenth century, remained to be discovered—namely, the identity in interest of the middle and lower classes. The lines which custom and prejudice had drawn between them grew fainter and fainter as the day approached for the full discovery of this truth. The earthquake shock of the French Revolution overthrew a throne rooted to the soil by the growth of a thousand years. Britain felt the crash. Scales fell from all eyes, and the people of the realm discovered that subjects, as well as kings, were clothed with Divine rights. Englishmen said so, in public addresses and resolutions, not always expressed in courtly phrase, nor rounded off in the style of rhetorical adulation so grateful to regal ears. The Crown, not having duly profited by the lesson the American revolutionists taught, indicted Hardy, Thelwall, Tooke, and their compatriots, for sedition and treason. These men were the representatives of both the middle and lower classes. Their constituents—THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND—combined for their mutual safety against the interests of

the privileged few. The wall of partition was partially broken down, and from that hour to this, the struggle between Right and prescriptive Privilege has gone on, distinguished by alternate defeat and victory, by heroic constancy and indomitable perseverance—noble martyrs dying, valiant combatants living, to continue the good fight.

Lord Castlereagh only repeated the adage of a hundred years when he said, “The people have nothing to do with the laws, except to obey them.” Parliament was opened with a formal King’s speech, to be followed by the annual budget of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, proposing to raise a loan for foreign wars, or a fund to sink the interest of the public debt. An oracular response was given by the minister now and then to some query touching the relations of the kingdom with continental powers, or the resources of some newly-acquired colony. Bills were introduced avowedly to promote the exclusive interests of the aristocracy, or to increase the resources of the clergy, and enforce the collection of their tithes. The interests of the great body of the people were looked upon as of secondary consideration, compared to the conservation of the privileged classes, the dignity of the nobility, the wealth of the Church, and the prerogatives of the Crown. How different now! The representatives of THE PEOPLE have broken into the sacred inclosure of “the Government,” and new men, with new opinions, have mingled with the ancient aristocracy, and encroached on all antiquated principles. Now, the multitude take cognizance of their own rights and wrongs, and indulge in searching examinations, and hot and irreverent discussions, in and out of Parliament, of poor laws, pension laws, game laws, corn laws, free trade, universal education, unrestricted religious toleration, standing armies, floating navies, East and West India emancipation, colonial independence, extended suffrage, the ballot, annual Parliaments, law reform, land reform, entails, primogeniture, with other matters of like import, about which the trader and the farmer of Queen Anne’s time knew but little, and never dared to call in question above his breath, but which, in the days of Vic-

toria, are the common talk of the artisan and yeoman. Ay, more than this, reforms not dreamed of in 1805 by Fox the liberal, have been proposed and carried in 1845 by Peel the conservative. "In the golden days of good Queen Bess," the common people paid their tithes and taxes, ate what bread they could get, and left law-making to the Knights of the Shire and the Peers of the Realm!

But he must be superficially read in history who supposes that the fruitful reforms which now strike their roots so deep into British soil, and throw their branches so high and wide over the land, were planted by this century. Their seeds were sown long since, and watered with the tears, and fertilized by the blood, of men pure and brave. From the conquest of William the Norman, down to the coronation of his successor, Victoria, one fact stands prominently on the page of English history, namely, that there has been a gradual circumscribing of the powers of the nobles and the prerogatives of the Crown, accompanied with a corresponding enlargement of the liberties of the people. Omitting many, I will glance at some of the more conspicuous landmarks in this highway of reform.

The mitigation of the rigours of the feudal system by William Rufus, the son of the Conqueror, by whom it was established.—The general institution of trial by jury, in the succeeding reign of Henry II., and the granting of freedom to the towns of the realm by royal charters.—Old King John, at Runnymede, affixing his sign-manual to MAGNA CHARTA, with trembling hand, at the dictation of his haughty barons and their retainers.—The establishment of the House of Commons about the middle of the thirteenth century, thus giving the commercial men of the middle class a voice in the Government.—Edward I., "the English Justinian," encouraging the courts in those decisions which tended to restrain the feudal lords, and protect their vassals; and approving a statute which declared that no tax or impost should be imposed without the consent of the Lords and Commons.—The introduction into England, in the latter part of the fifteenth century, of the art of printing, and the conse-

quent cheapness of the price of books, and the diffusion of that knowledge which is power.—The discovery of America, giving an impulse to British commerce, and increasing the importance of the trading classes, by placing in their hands those sinews of war which kings must have, or cease to make conquests.—The Reformation, introduced into England in 1534, unfettering the conscience, and giving to the laity the highest of all charters of human rights, the Bible.—The Petition of Right—the British Declaration of Independence—signed by Charles I. in 1628, under the dictation of his Parliament, which materially curbed the royal prerogative.—The execution of that monarch, sternly giving the lie to the maxim that kings can do no wrong.—The succeeding Commonwealth, when a Huntingdonshire farmer swayed with more than regal majesty the sceptre which had so often dropped from the feebler hands of the Plantagenets and Tudors.—The passage of the *Habeas Corpus* Act in 1678, in the reign of Charles II., who saved his head by surrendering his veto.—The Revolution of 1688, which deposed one line of kings and preferred another; prescribing to the elected monarch his coronation oath, and exacting his ratification of the new Declaration of Rights.—The American Revolution, with its Declaration of Independence, teaching the House of Hanover the salutary truth, that wise concession is the safety of princes who wish to reign over a free people. These, and cognate epochs in English history, which preceded those Modern Reforms of which I am more particularly to speak, are links in that long chain of events which gradually circumscribed the power of princes and nobles. Each was a concession to that spirit of liberty, and to those free principles, which, framed of old by the innate love of freedom of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers, have ever since worked with more or less power in the development of the institutions of Great Britain.

CHAPTER II.

British Cabinets from 1770 to 1830—Summary of the Efforts of the Reformers, from the War of 1793 to the formation of the Grey Ministry in 1830.

BEFORE specially considering any one prominent reform in English history, a general summary of events may be profitable. It will be *but* a summary, preliminary to a more general discussion, and will be mainly confined to the period between the French Revolution and the formation of the Grey Ministry in 1830.

From 1770 to 1830, the Government of Great Britain was, with the exception of a few months, swayed by the enemies of Reform. In the former year, the celebrated Lord North, who had previously led the Tories in the House of Commons, assumed the premiership. He retained his place, his principles, and his power, twelve years. In 1782, a *quasi* liberal ministry supplanted him, headed by Rockingham, Fox, and Burke, which was dissolved in three months, by the death of Rockingham, when Fox, Burke, and their friends, refused to unite under Shelburne, the succeeding Tory Premier, who sought new supporters, giving young Pitt the seals of the Exchequer and the lead in the Commons. Stung by mortification at their exclusion from office, Fox and Burke united with North in forming the famous "Coalition," and in April 1783 prostrated Shelburne. Thereupon a new ministry was made up of those disaffected Whig and Tory chiefs : Fox, Burke, the Duke of Portland, and Lord North, being its leading spirits. This coalition, which for years damaged the fame of Fox, struggled for its unnatural existence till the following December, when, failing to carry Mr. Fox's India Bill, it expired, dishonoured and unregretted. Pitt, "the pilot that weathered the storm," then took the helm of state, which he held eighteen tempestuous years, and was succeeded, not supplanted, in 1801, by the weak but amiable Mr. Addington. Lord Hawkesbury

(the subsequent Lord Liverpool) took the office of Foreign Secretary; Eldon (Sir John Scott) was promoted to the woolsack and the House of Peers; and Perceval accepted the rank of Solicitor-General. This ministry leaned on Pitt for support, and was his puppet, having taken office to do what he was too proud to perform—make peace with France. The war demon smoothed his wrinkled front only for a short period, when his visage suddenly became grim, and the ship of state was, in 1803, again exposed to the storm of a European contest. The helm soon slipped from the feeble hands of Addington, and “the pilot” was recalled to his old station, where he remained till 1806, when his lofty spirit, sinking under the shock of the overthrow at Austerlitz of the Continental coalition against Napoleon, of which he was the animating soul, he sunk, mortified and broken-hearted, into a premature grave.

A liberal ministry, clustering around Lord Grenville and Mr. Fox, took up the reins of power which had dropped from the dying hands of Pitt, abolished the slave trade, attempted to ameliorate the condition of the Catholics, encountered the opposition of George III., failed, resigned, and were succeeded by an ultra Tory administration, of which Perceval, Liverpool, Eldon, Castlereagh, and Canning were the chief members. For six years they followed in the footsteps of Pitt, fighting Napoleon abroad and Reformers at home, propping up the thrones of continental despots, and fortifying the prerogatives of the English Crown, till, in 1812, Perceval, who was then Premier, fell by the pistol of a madman in the lobby of the House of Commons. Nearly simultaneously with putting the crazy assassin to death, with the form of a trial, Liverpool, as Premier, and Castlereagh as Foreign Secretary, came into power, and, pursuing the policy of Pitt and Perceval, the same ministry, with occasional modifications, retained its place until the death of Liverpool in 1827. Castlereagh, the life and soul of the administration, and on that very account highly unpopular with the people, died by his own hand in 1822, and was succeeded in the Foreign Department by

Canning, who infused a more liberal spirit into the English cabinet.

Such had been the advance towards free principles amongst the body of the people during the fifteen years of Liverpool's administration, that George IV. had great difficulty in forming a new ministry. Wellington and Peel refused to become members if the friends of Catholic Emancipation were admitted, and Canning refused to join if they were excluded. After a long train of negotiations, the anger of the king exploded at the stubbornness of the Iron Duke, and he gave Canning his royal hand to kiss, with a *carte blanche* for the enrolment of a ministry. Canning formed a mixed Government, whose average quality was modified Toryism. He brought into the Government Robinson and Huskisson, his recent associates in the Liverpool cabinet, whose liberal course on trade and finance during the previous four years fore-shadowed the repeal of the corn laws and the dawning of better days. Wellington and Peel spurned the amalgamation, whilst Eldon—not without strong manifestations of his disinclination to succumb—surrendered the great seal, which he had grasped for twenty-six years to the great detriment of suitors with short purses, and the great profit of barristers with long wind. The country expected much from the new administration. But whether well or ill founded, its anticipations were extinguished in a few brief months by the death of the brilliant genius who had inspired such hopes. When the grave closed over Canning, Lord Goderich (Mr. Robinson) organized a piebald ministry, of such incongruous materials that it broke in pieces almost in the very act of being set up. Wellington was then summoned to the king's closet, and in January 1828 became Premier, giving the lead of the Commons to his favourite, Peel, and himself undertaking to control the House of Peers, much according to the tactics of the field of Waterloo. The Iron Duke and the able commoner, both of whom had refused to join Canning because he favoured Catholic amelioration, now reluctantly granted, because they dared not withhold, the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, and

the emancipation of the Catholics! The Wellington-Peel Government struggled bravely till late in 1830, when the tide of Parliamentary Reform, rising to a resistless height, overwhelmed them, and the first liberal ministry which England had witnessed (excepting for a few distracted months) for sixty-five years, was organized by Earl Grey. Fortunate above most statesmen, he was now to see the seeds of that reform which, forty years before, in the fervour of youth, he sowed in Parliament, and had steadily cultivated through long years of contumely and reproach, yield an abundance which his matured hand was to garner in, whilst the rejoicing people “shouted the Harvest Home.”

The reader will find this dry detail of names and dates not without its use to him ; and it may be further noted, that in glancing over the dreary wastes which stretch between the elevation of North and the downfall of Wellington, but few verdant spots rise to relieve the reformer’s eye. From the commencement of the French war, in 1793, till the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, in 1828, not a solitary important reform was carried, except the abolition of the slave trade, and the British empire was ruled solely by an unreasoning Conservatism. But, though nothing was *perfected* in these thirty-five years, no period of British history teems with events more gratifying to a hopeful and progressive humanity. Foul and fetid as were the waters of this Dead Sea, they were constantly stirred by a healthful and purifying agitation. These years were a preparation for better times ; and all the reforms which, from 1828 till now, have blessed, and are blessing England, were never forgotten, but continually pressed upon the attention of Parliament and the country, by a resolute band of men illustrious for their talents and their services. In proof of this, a few rude landmarks, before entering upon a more minute survey of this period, may be worth the erecting.

The trials at the Old Bailey in 1794, of Tooke, Hardy, and their associates, prosecuted for high treason for their words and acts as members of a Society for Parliamentary Reform, were the first outbreak of the wide-spread alarm at

the prevalence of the political opinions introduced into the kingdom by the French Revolution. The Government was foiled ; the prisoners were acquitted ; Erskine, their advocate, won unfading laurels ; and the doctrine of “constructive treason” was for ever exploded in England.

The foreign policy of Pitt and his successors, which sent England on a twenty-five years’ crusade to fight the battles of Absolutism on the continent, encountered the fiery logic of Fox, the dazzling declamation of Sheridan, the analytical reasoning of Tierney, the dignified rebukes of Grey, the sturdy sense of Whitbread, the scholastic arguments of Horner, and the bold assaults of Burdett. And at a later period, when the Government made England the subservient tool of the Holy Alliance, Brougham made the land echo with appeals to the national love of liberty, till Canning, in 1823, protested against the acts of the allied sovereigns, and in the following year declared in the House of Commons, while the old chamber rung with plaudits, that ministers had refused to become a party to a new congress of the allies.

In 1806-7, the slave trade fell, under the united attacks of Wilberforce, Fox, and Pitt ; Clarkson, Sharpe, and other worthies, supplying the ammunition for the assault. And the West India slave, long forgotten, was remembered when Canning, in 1823, introduced resolutions that immediate measures ought to be adopted by the planters to secure such a gradual improvement in the slave’s condition as might render safe his ultimate admission to participation in the civil rights and privileges of other classes of his Majesty’s subjects ; and addressed a corresponding ministerial circular to the colonies.

In 1809, Romilly brought his eminent legal knowledge and graceful eloquence to bear against the sanguinary criminal code inherited from a dark age, which had hitherto resisted the progress of civilization. He subsequently exposed the abuses of the Court of Chancery, which, under the tardy administration of “that everlasting doubter,” Lord Eldon, pressed heavily on the country. He laid bare the absurd

technicalities and verbosities which blocked the avenues to the common law courts. His death arrested these reforms when he had only removed some of this rubbish, and softened a few of the asperities of the criminal code; but the philosophic and classical Mackintosh resumed the work, and carrying a motion for inquiry in defiance of the opposition of ministers in 1819, he pressed it nearer that consummation which Brougham, Williams, and Denman achieved at a later day. The cause of law reform was powerfully aided by the closet labours of that singular philosopher, Jeremy Bentham, whose world-wide researches and books, written in a style as consecutive and tedious as the blue-books of a Parliamentary committee, discussed everything pertaining to government, from the constitution of a kingdom to the construction of a workhouse.

The condition of Ireland, and the relief of the Catholics, occupied much of the public attention during the period under review. The rebellion of 1798 turned all eyes towards that devoted island. The next year Pitt proposed the Legislative Union. It encountered the fierce epigrams of Sheridan; and though it passed both Houses, it met with such vehement opposition from the Irish Parliament, that it was abandoned till the next year, when Pitt renewed the proposal. Grattan, the very soul of Irish chivalry, rained down upon it a shower of invective from the West side of the channel, and was seconded by the glittering oratory of Sheridan, and the calmer reasoning of Grey and Lord Holland on the East. But Britain bribed Ireland to accept the proffered alliance. In 1807, Lord Grenville, who was ever a firm friend of religious liberty and of Ireland, and Grey, in behalf of the Cabinet, proposed an amelioration of the bigoted code which made the adherence of the Roman Catholic to his creed a crime. They failed, and ministers resigned. The question of Catholic relief was pressed to a division, in various forms, fourteen times, without success, from 1805 to 1819. In the latter year, Grattan moved that the House take into consideration the matter of Catholic Emancipation, and failed by only two votes. In 1821, Plunkett, distin-

guished for his attainments and virtues, and a model of eloquence, whether standing at the Irish bar or in the British Senate, carried the motion Grattan lost, notwithstanding the strenuous resistance of Peel, by a majority of six. He followed up his victory by pushing the Consolidation Bill (a measure of amelioration only) through the Commons; but it was thrown out by the Lords. Sparing further details for the present, suffice it to say, that at intervals during this period, Sydney Smith, with his Peter Plymley Letters, laughed to scorn the fears of high churchmen; a host of pamphleteers of all sizes sifted the question to its very chaff, and O'Connell and his "Associations" and "Unions," in spite of the suspension of the *habeas corpus*, and the enactment of coercion bills, agitated from the Giant's Causeway to Cape Clear, and ultimately wrung from the fears of the conservative party what their sense of justice would not give.

The Protestant dissenters, with a less rude hand, had knocked at the doors of Parliament, demanding the reformation of the Established Church, and the enactment of complete toleration. The rich clergy were compelled by law to pay higher salaries to their poor curates—Hume's denunciations fell with special severity on the bench of bishops, while the accumulated evils which had crept into various branches of the Establishment were exposed to the uninitiated, when Brougham carried his bill against ministers, in 1819, for a Board of Commissioners to investigate the abuses of public charities. The Corporation and Test Acts, which enslaved the consciences of dissenters, were denounced by Fox and Burdett, preparatory to their ultimate repeal (of which more anon) by Lord John Russell's bill in 1828.

Nor was the importance of educating the masses forgotten. Not content with aiding Romilly, Smith, Horner, Mackintosh, and Jeffrey, in instructing the higher circles by frequent contributions to the Edinburgh Review on domestic and European politics, Brougham wrote rudimentary tracts for the lower orders, lectured to Mechanics' Institutes, contributed to Penny Magazines, and in 1820, after a speech which exhibited his perfect familiarity with the edu-

cational condition of the unlettered masses, he launched in Parliament his scheme for the instruction of the poor in England and Wales; thus proving that he coveted the eulogy bestowed on another, as "the patron of all the arts that humanize and elevate mankind."

Having seen this favourite scheme fairly afloat, this wonderful man turned to far different employments. The misguided but injured Queen Caroline landed in England in 1820, amidst the shoutings of the populace. Ministers immediately brought in their bill of pains and penalties; that is, a bill to degrade and divorce the Queen, without giving her the benefit of those ordinary forms of law which protect even the confessed criminal. She appointed Brougham her Attorney-General. In the midst of such a popular ferment as England has rarely seen, he boldly assailed not only the Government, but the King himself, who had by his licentiousness justly exposed himself to the contempt with which history will ever associate the name of George IV. with those of Henry VIII. and Charles II.

The corn laws were the subject of frequent debates and divisions. Waiving till another occasion their more particular consideration, it may here be stated, that the frequent recurrence of extreme agricultural and commercial distress always brought with it into Parliament the subject of the corn trade, provoking a discussion of the antagonistic theories of protection and free trade, and challenging to the arena the learning and experience of Burdett, Horner, Ricardo, Baring, Hume, Huskisson, and Brougham. It was on these occasions that Canning as member for Liverpool used to exhibit that close familiarity with the statistics of political economy and of domestic and foreign trade, and of the laws of demand and supply, which surprised even those acquainted with his exhaustless versatility. His only match in this department was Huskisson, to whose enlightened and steady advocacy of unrestricted commerce its friends are greatly indebted. As early as 1823, this gentleman, though generally conservative, moved a set of resolutions providing

for an annual and rapid reduction of the duties on foreign corn, till the desired point should have been attained.

Closely allied to this subject was that of budgets, sinking funds, loans, civil lists, and army and navy expenditures—all summed up in the word *taxes*. The means of paying the interest on the £600,000,000 debt Pitt had run up in re-enthroning the French Bourbons (not to speak of the £240,000,000 before existing) was to be provided for. The current expenses of the Government required large sums. Under this annual load of taxation, a nation of merchant princes might have staggered. The liberal party pleaded for economy and retrenchment in the army and navy, in the church and the state. Brougham, Ricardo, and other able financiers, applied the pruning-knife to the prolific tree of taxation and expenditure. But the chief annoyance of ministers was Mr. Hume. After he entered Parliament, all schemes for raising or appropriating money encountered his scrutinizing eye and merciless arithmetic. With no other eloquence than the multiplication table, he as rarely made mistakes in his calculations. And whenever Mr. Vansittart, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, appeared on the floor with his money bills, his tormentor was sure to assail him, and by his skilful use of the weapons of an able financier, to expose the fallacies or denounce the injustice of his measures.

Parliamentary Reform, the engine by which the people of England must work out a bloodless revolution, was repeatedly agitated, and with various results. Stormy debates, followed by divisions and defeats, did not discourage Grey, Mackintosh, Brougham, Lambton, and Russell, within doors, nor Tooke, Cartwright, Cobbett, Hunt, and a host of other men without, including some who were actuated by very questionable motives—from seeking enlarged suffrage and equal representation. Nor did laws enacted to stop the circulation amongst the working classes of cheap publications, by laying a tax on them, and to put down reformatory societies, under the pretext of prohibiting seditious meetings; and to seize arms found in the hands of the

lower orders, so that their assemblies might be dispersed the more readily without fear of retaliation; nor the occasional searching of a library, demolishing a press, and sending a writer or lecturer to Botany Bay, deter the masses from persisting in their demand that "the People's *House* should be open to the People's *Representatives*." Passing by many noteworthy occurrences, we find Birmingham, in 1819 (without a representative for its teeming thousands, while the borough of Grampound, with scarce an inhabitant, had two), adopting the bold measure of electing a member to represent it in the House of Commons! The same year, a large and peaceable meeting of reformers at Manchester was dispersed by yeomanry with much violence and loss of life. The common people throughout the kingdom were deeply moved at this spectacle—riots followed—troops shed more blood—ministers denounced the agitators—Burdett defended them—Brougham defied ministers, and Lord John Russell numbered the days of Grampound. The next session he moved to disfranchise that rotten borough, which had been convicted of bribery, and to transfer its members to Leeds. He failed. The next session, Lambton (Earl Durham) brought in a bill for radical reform, and was defeated by a trick of the ministers. Lord John renewed the conflict with another bill—the people's petitions crowded the tables of the House—ministers began to give way—Grampound was disfranchised, its members transferred to York county, and thus the first step was gained! In 1823, Lord John led on the attack by explaining a well-digested scheme of reform in a luminous speech. Canning made a conciliatory reply, and, in his brilliant peroration, told Russell he would yet succeed, but on his head be the responsibility. Russell was beaten, but the minority was swelled by the accession for the first time of several young members of the ancient nobility. During this year, the death of Castlereagh terminated his insidious and powerful opposition to the popular movements for political reform. The "radicals" (a name which the reformers received when Birmingham elected her member) took courage—Lord John beat minis-

ters on an incidental question—Old Sarum trembled for her ancient privileges—the French monarchy was temporarily overthrown, and Earl Grey rose to power.

In this summary, which has been constructed without strict attention to chronological order and historical symmetry, I have only aimed to show that, from 1793 to 1830, the struggle for freedom was maintained by a zealous band of patriots, many of whom find few parallels in English history, whether we consider the vigour of their understandings, the extent of their knowledge, the splendour of their genius, the lustre of their services, or the fidelity and courage with which they followed the fortunes of the liberal cause through thirty-seven years of opposition to power backed by court favour and ministerial patronage.

CHAPTER III.

Treason Trials of 1794—Societies for Reform—Constructive Treason—Horne Tooke—Mr. Erskine.

THE first conflict between Englishmen and their rulers, to which I shall now more particularly refer, is the sedition and treason trials, near the close of the last century; especially the trials of JOHN HORNE TOOKE, HARDY, THELWALL, and their associates, in 1794, for high treason. The victories then achieved heralded those subsequent reforms in Church and State which have already so largely contributed to the best interests of the people of England. It was the crisis of British freedom. Though failure then would not have uprooted the goodly tree, it might have long retarded its luxuriant growth. Major Cartwright ("that old heart of sedition," as Canning called him), one of England's early reformers, in a letter written at the time, said:—"Had these trials ended otherwise than they have, the system of proscription and terror, which has for some time been grow-

ing in this country, would have been completed and written in blood." The verdicts of "not guilty" not only pronounced the acquittal of the prisoners, but proclaimed the right of individuals and associations to examine and reprobate the acts of the Crown and Parliament; to discuss the foundations of government, and to declare the rights of man and the wrongs of rulers; and to arouse public opinion to demand such changes in the laws as would secure the liberties of the people. The crime charged against Tooke and his associates was, endeavouring to excite a rebellion, overthrow the monarchy, wage war on the king, and compass his death. Their real offence was, belonging to "The London Corresponding Society" and "The Society for Constitutional Information," better known as Societies for Parliamentary Reform, in which they canvassed the nature of government, the rights of the people, and the acts of their rulers, and specially advocated a reform in the Parliamentary representation and the electoral suffrage.

This was no new movement. Similar associations had existed for twenty years. The Society of "The Friends of the People" numbered among its members the names of the Duke of Richmond, Pitt, Grey, and various other men of rank. They had held meetings, published pamphlets, and petitioned Parliament. Discussions had taken place in both houses. In 1770, the great Chatham advocated a moderate reform in the representation in the lower house. In 1776, Wilkes, the favourite of the London populace, made an able speech on moving for leave to bring in a bill to accomplish the same end. In 1783, Pitt, yielding to the generous impulses of youth, moved for a committee to inquire into the subject, and supported his motion in two eloquent speeches. In 1790, Flood, the celebrated Irishman, spoke with fervour on moving for a more equal representation in the Commons, and was replied to by Wyndham and Pitt (now frightened by the French revolution), and powerfully supported by Fox, then in the zenith of his fame, and by Grey, just giving earnest of those talents which, forty years after, carried the Reform Bill through the lords. The

discussion of kindred topics in Parliament during the same periods stimulated the popular party. The expulsion of Wilkes from the Commons ; the seizure of his papers and the imprisonment of his person in the Tower for a seditious libel against the Tory Government ; his repeated re-election by his Middlesex constituency, and the votes of the House declaring his seat still vacant ; the consequent debates in both houses during the years 1768-70 excited the populace to the verge of rebellion, and challenged inquiry into the relative rights of the people and the Parliament. The debates on the stamp act, the taxation of the colonies, and the American war, covering fifteen years, enlisted the best powers of Chatham, Burke, Fox, and Barre, and elicited from those high sources strong declarations of the rights of man. The denunciations of the test acts and of the Catholic penal code by Fox and his followers, from 1786 to 1790, as subversive of the rights of conscience, added fuel to the popular flame. All these agitations within the walls of Parliament were but the remoter pulsations of the great heart beating without—the faint shadows of that spirit of reform, which till then had numbered its representatives by units and its constituency by hundreds of thousands.

The political sea, ruffled by these winds, was soon to be agitated by violent storms. The French Revolution produced a profound sensation in all classes of Englishmen. The fulminations of its *third estate* against monarchy, and the democratic doctrines of Paine's Rights of Man (republished in England from the Parisian edition, and scattered far and wide), awoke inquiries in thousands of British hearts. The people felt their grievances to be more intolerable than ever, and the example of France emboldened them to demand redress in firmer tones. The London Society for Constitutional Information, which had grown languid, suddenly felt a revival of more than its original spirit, and kindred associations sprang into existence all over the kingdom. Their orators declaimed upon the rights of man, painted his wrongs, extolled the merits of the people, and denounced

the excesses of bishops and nobles. The oppressions and disabilities of the middle and lower classes (of both which the societies were mainly composed), afforded ample materials for these appeals to the best and worst passions of human nature.

The Government was alarmed. The events of France in 1792 had determined the English ministry to crush in the bud the revolution they dreaded at home. Their real object was to prostrate the reform associations. Louis was deposed, and the Republic had decreed fraternity and aid to the people of all nations in recovering their liberties. Riots occurred in some of the English manufacturing towns. Parliament was hastily convened, and it was announced in the King's speech that conspiracies existed for overthrowing the Government, and that the kingdom was on the eve of a revolution. In the debate on the King's speech, the minister said that seditious societies had been instituted, under the plausible pretext of discussing constitutional questions, but really to promote an insurrection of the people. Mr. Fox met the assertions of the Minister with a denial, the language of which borders on rebellious defiance. He declared, "there was not one fact stated in his Majesty's speech which was not false—not one assertion or insinuation which was not unfounded. The prominent feature of it was, that it was an intolerable calumny on the people of Great Britain—an insinuation of so gross and black a nature that it demanded the most rigorous inquiry and the most severe punishment!" Bold words these, not unlike those of Cromwell, when he declared "he would as soon put his sword through the heart of the king as that of any other man."

But the Government was not to be arrested in its course by the bold words of the Opposition leader. It continued to prosecute printers and lecturers for seditious libels and speeches, fining, imprisoning, and transporting, according to the caprice or fears of the State prosecutor. The progress of events in France was precipitating the crisis. In 1793, Louis and his Queen were guillotined, and the

next year saw their daughter the Princess Elizabeth's head fall, while the bloody rule of Robespierre filled Europe with consternation and horror. It need not greatly excite our wonder that such fruits of the French popular movement for reform should awaken increased apprehensions in the minds of English conservatives. Pitt was alarmed. Prosecutions for sedition did not reach the seat of the disease. Royal proclamations did not silence the reformers. The constitutional societies still met and debated. Early in the session of 1794, he brought in bills to confer on the Government extraordinary powers to detect suspicious persons, and to suspend the *habeas corpus* act. After a contest, in which Fox, Grey, and Sheridan stood by the popular cause, the bills passed. The *habeas corpus* was suspended in May 1794. The safeguard of English liberty being thus set aside, a blow was aimed at the societies, through some of their leading members. Informations for high treason were filed in May by the Attorney-General (Sir John Scott—Lord Eldon) against Tooke, Hardy, Thelwall, and nine others, and they were sent to the Tower to await their trials. Both parties now prepared for a death-struggle. The Ministers trusted for success to the power of the Crown, the subserviency of the judges, and the wide-spread panic among the higher classes. The common people, though alarmed at the strength of this combination, still trusted to the innocence of the accused; and though the more timid erased their names from the roll of the societies, the mass resolved to make a stand for the freedom of speech and the press, and the right of associating for redress of grievances, worthy of the exigency. From the papers of the London Society, which had been seized, it appeared that the members contemplated holding a National Convention to promote Parliamentary Reform; and this, Toryism regarded as a conspiracy to subvert the monarchy and establish a republic!

I have stated the crime with which these men were charged. Indicted for conspiring to subvert the monarchy, depose the King, and compass his death, it was pretended that they

had uttered and published seditious words with the intent to alter the Government; when, in fact, they had only advocated radical reforms in the two Houses of Parliament. The *existence* of the constitutional societies and their *doings* were clearly legal. No doubt, many unguarded and some unwarranted expressions about the King and Parliament had been used. But nothing had been said or done which, on a fair construction, exposed the parties to a just conviction of any crime. Most assuredly they were not guilty of high treason; and as surely their words and deeds were tame and gentle, compared with what the English press and people have since said and done within hearing of Ministers, and under the eye of Majesty. In short, it was designed to immolate them on the judicial guillotine of "CONSTRUCTIVE TREASON."

The character and station of the prisoners excited the interest of different ranks of society. They were shut up in the Tower for six months, closely confined, and all access to them by their friends was denied. Hardy was a shoemaker, and, with two or three others, fairly represented the most intelligent among the working classes. Kyd was a barrister; Holcroft, a dramatic writer; Joyce, a minister; and Thelwall, a political lecturer. These belonged to the middle class. JOHN HORNE TOOKE, the most considerable person among them, held a debatable position in the higher circles. He was a gentleman of aristocratic connections, and a scholar of rare and varied learning. He had taken holy orders in his youth, but had long ago left the church for the closet of the student, and the forum of the politician. He was the author of a profound philosophical treatise on the English language, called "*The Diversions of Purley*." Many then supposed him to be the author of Junius. He had had a violent newspaper controversy, feigned or real, with that writer, and had worsted him. He was the ablest pamphleteer and debater among the ultra-liberalists, and was ever ready, with his keen pen and bold tongue, to contend with the scribes of the Government through the press, or its orators on the rostrum; and he never gave either cause to con-

gratulate themselves on the results of the encounter. Nearly twenty years earlier he had stood before the same tribunal, and defended himself with consummate skill, and a courage bordering on audacity, against a prosecution for publishing a defence of "the American rebels" at the battle of Lexington. He and his associates were now to make a stand for their lives.

The trials took place at the Old Bailey, in October and November 1794, and extended through several weeks. The prisoners were defended by Erskine, whose name was a tower of strength, and Gibbs, a lawyer famed for his legal knowledge. Tooke aided in his own case, whilst Scott, long-headed, learned, and unscrupulous, assisted by the Solicitor-General, prosecuted for the Crown. The hall and the passages leading to it were densely thronged with persons of all ranks and conditions, eager spectators of, or participants in, one of the most memorable struggles which the courts of common law have witnessed. No overt *acts* of any moment could be proved against either of the accused, and the prosecution had to rely mainly on ambiguous words and writings of doubtful import. The whole power of the Crown and of the Judges of the Court, was brought to bear against the prisoners, aided by the multifarious lore and subtle reasoning of the Attorney-General. Every doubtful word was distorted, every ambiguous look transformed into lurking treason. The rules of evidence were put to the rack to admit letters and conversations, written and uttered by others than the accused, and to hold them responsible for all that had been said and done by every man who, at any time and anywhere, had belonged to the societies, or taken part in their discussions. The friends of the prisoners felt the keenest suspense as the trials proceeded, for they knew if the prosecution succeeded, a reign of terror had begun, in which the Crown was to enact Robespierre, and they were to be the victims. But neither the fears of the Court at Windsor, nor the partialities of the Court at London, could suffice against a British jury, nor the unscrupulous zeal of the Crown lawyers outweigh the learning,

the skill, and the eloquence, which Erskine threw into his cause. He knew that twelve "good and true men" stood between the lion and his prey. The Court ruled that if the jury believed the discussions and writings of the prisoners, or of the societies to which they belonged, tended to subvert the monarchy and depose the King, or change the Constitution, they must find them guilty. But Erskine maintained, with a power of argument which, for the moment, shook the faith of the Court, that *for British subjects to utter their sentiments in ANY FORM concerning the Government of their country, was not TREASON.* So thought the jurors (though the Court leaned to the side of the Crown), and one after another the prisoners passed the terrible ordeal. The Government lost; the People won; and great was the rejoicing with which the triumph of popular rights was hailed throughout the whole kingdom.

Hardy, whose case was extremely perilous, was first placed at the bar. His trial lasted nine days. Tooke's came next, and Thelwall's next; when the prosecutors, frantic with rage and mortification at their signal overthrow, abandoned the contest. When Tooke was acquitted, the joy of the people knew no bounds. He was an old reformer, had ever been the steady advocate of popular rights, and was the idol of the reformers. He had suffered much before in the common cause. His library had been repeatedly ransacked for treasonable papers, his family insulted, and his person again and again thrust into prison. And now they had seen him stand for six days, battling with the Court, and bearing unruffled the taunts with which the Government witnesses had poorly withstood his searching cross-examination, contending for a life devoted to the service of the people. When the foreman pronounced the words "Not Guilty," the roof of the Old Bailey rang with plaudits. After addressing a few words to the Court, he turned and said: "I hope, Mr. Attorney-General, that this verdict will be a warning to you not to attempt again to shed men's blood on lame suspicions and doubtful inferences." He then thanked the jury with much emotion for the life they had spared to him. Some of the

jury were seen to shed tears—the very men who had been so obviously packed to convict him, that at the opening of the trial Erskine said, “Mr. Tooke, they are murdering you!” The populace bore the old patriot through the passages to the street, where they sent up shout upon shout. It was a day of rejoicing for reformers, and its anniversary is still remembered as that of a great popular triumph.

Erskine's speech for Hardy (whose case was very critical, and the first one tried) is one of the most splendid specimens of popular juridical eloquence on record. Owing to the running contests on points of law and evidence, constantly kept up while the trial went on, he lost his voice the night before he was to address the jury. He recovered it, however, in the morning, and was able for seven hours to give utterance to such eloquence as is rarely heard in our day. He regarded Hardy's acquittal or conviction not only as the turning point in the fate of his eleven associates, but as settling the question whether constructive treason should for years track blood through the land, or its murderous steps be now brought to a final stand. He made a daring effort for victory, and achieved it. Rare indeed as were his reasoning faculties, his legal learning, classical taste, and transcendent oratorical powers, all conspiring to place him not only at the head of the English bar, but to rank him as the first advocate of modern times; yet all were overshadowed by the inflexible courage and hearty zeal with which he met this crisis of British freedom. With the combined power of the King, ministers, and judges, all arrayed against his clients, and against him as their representative, seeking their blood and his degradation, he cowered not, but maintained the indefeasible rights of his proscribed fellow-subjects with arguments so matchless, with eloquence so glowing, with courage so heroic, with constancy so generous, that his name will ever find a place in the hearts of all who prefer the rights of man to the prerogatives of power. But more than all; he exploded the doctrine of constructive treason, and established the law on the true foundation, that there must be some

overt act to constitute guilt; and he reinscribed upon the Constitution of England the principle, that Englishmen may freely speak and publish their opinions concerning the Government of their country without being guilty of treason—a principle, under whose protecting shield they now utter their complaints, their denunciations, their remonstrances and appeals, in the very ear of Majesty itself.

CHAPTER IV.

Constructive Treason—The Law of Libel and Sedition—The Dean of St. Asaph
—The Rights of Juries—Erskine—Fox—Pitt.

DOWN to the period of the trials of Tooke, Hardy, and others, for high treason, in 1794, and of the successful attack then made by Mr. ERSKINE on the doctrine of constructive treason, the English law of treason was infamous. Among other things, treason was defined to be waging war against the King, or compassing and imagining his death, or the overthrow of his Government. The law evidently contemplated the doing of some *act*, designed and adapted to accomplish these ends. But the construction of the courts had subverted this principle, and declared the mere utterance of *words* high treason. In the reign of Edward IV. a citizen was executed for saying “he would make his son heir of *the crown*,” meaning, as was supposed, that he would make him heir of his *inn*, called “*the Crown*.” Another, whose favourite buck the King had wantonly killed, was executed for saying, “he wished the buck, horns and all, in the bowels of the man who counselled the King to kill it.” The court gravely held, that as the King had killed it of his own accord, and so was his own counsellor, this declaration was imagining the King’s death, and therefore treason! So it had been held, that using words tending to overawe Parliament, and procure the repeal of a law, was levying war on the King, and therefore treasonable.

At length the courts yielded to the doctrine that there must be some overt act to constitute the crime. But they also held that, reducing words to *writing* was an overt act, even though they were never read or printed! Peachum, a clergyman, was convicted of high treason for passages found in a sermon which had never been preached. The immortal Algernon Sidney was executed, and his blood attainted, for some unpublished papers found in his closet, containing merely speculative opinions in favour of a republican form of government. It was in allusion to this judicial murder by the infamous Jeffries, and to the fact that the record of the conviction had been destroyed, that Erskine, on the trial of Hardy, uttered the splendid anathema against "those who took from the files the sentence against Sidney, which should have been left on record to all ages, that it might arise and blacken in the sight, like the handwriting on the wall before the Eastern tyrant, to deter from outrages upon justice." It has been seen that this peerless lawyer exploded these dangerous doctrines, and made it safe for Englishmen to speak and write freely against King and Government, without exposure to conviction for treason.

But this is not the only salutary legal reform for which England is indebted to his exertions. The law of CRIMINAL PROSECUTIONS FOR LIBELS AND SEDITIOUS WRITINGS, was equally pernicious, till his strong arguments and scathing appeals had shaken it to its foundations; as will be seen by a glance at its terms. Any publication imputing bad motives to King or Minister; or charging any branch of Government with corruption, or a wish to infringe the liberties of the people; or which cast ridicule upon the Established Church; and any writing, printing, or speaking, which tended to excite the people to hatred or contempt of the Government, or to change the laws in an improper manner, &c., were seditious libels, for which fine, imprisonment, the pillory, &c., might be imposed. Nor was the truth of the libel any defence. Such were the snares ingeniously constructed to entangle unwary reformers, and enable the Crown to crush intractable opponents. And these bad laws were worse

administered. The juries, the only check in the hands of the people, *had no power in their administration*. The court withheld from the jury the question whether a writing was libellous or seditious, and permitted them only to decide whether the prisoner had published it. In a word, if the jury found that he *published*, they must convict; and then the judge pronounced the sentence. These trials were ready weapons for State prosecution in the hands of a tyrannical King and Ministry, with pliant judges at their beck; and in the latter half of the last century they were used with little mercy. They struck down Wilkes, Tooke, Woodfall, Muir, Palmer, Holt, Cartwright, and other liberals, for publications and speeches in vindication of the people, which, at this day, would be held harmless in England. Some were heavily fined, others imprisoned or transported, others set on the pillory, their houses searched, their private papers rifled, their printing presses seized, their goods confiscated, their names branded as evil, and they might regard their lot as fortunate if their prospects for life were not utterly ruined. The treatment of Muir and Palmer, in 1793, was barbarous. Muir was a respectable barrister, and Palmer a Unitarian minister of good literary attainments. They had merely addressed meetings and associations for Parliamentary reform in Glasgow and Edinburgh, and reports of one or two of their speeches had been printed. Muir was sentenced to transportation for fourteen years, and Palmer for seven. They were shipped off to Botany Bay with a band of common felons; and other persons were prosecuted for attending a Reform Convention in Edinburgh the same year. But a totally different state of things now prevails, and a lofty stone obelisk on the Calton Hill of Edinburgh, styled "the Martyrs' Monument," bears inscribed on it the names of those who thus suffered in the great contest for the rights of the people, and bore so fearless a part in the first movements of the bold struggle by which victory has been achieved.

The times of which I write were prolific of these State

prosecutions. Mr. Erskine was the ready counsel of the proscribed reformers then, as Mr. Brougham was at a later period. His great effort on these trials was to convince the court that the juries had the right to decide upon the character of the publication in making up their verdicts ; or, in legal phrase, that they were "judges both of law and fact." In this effort he had many a fierce conflict with the judges, when, with his usual courage, he braved their rebukes and challenged the execution of their insinuated threats to commit him for contempt. He always argued this point fully to the court, in the presence of the jury ; and such was his mastery over the reason and the feelings, that he sometimes prevented a conviction when he could not obtain an acquittal. It was in an affair of this sort that he had a quarrel with Mr. Justice Buller, a judge who possessed the imperiousness of Mansfield without his talents, and whose frown, lowering out from under his huge wig, silenced many a barrister of more than common nerve. A distinguished Churchman, the DEAN OF ST. ASAPH, who had published a clever political tract, under the guise of a dialogue between King George and a farmer, was brought to trial. Erskine went down to defend him. Buller presided at the trial. Erskine argued his favourite topic with his accustomed ability. The jury listened with absorbing attention ; the judge with impatient interruptions. He charged furiously against the Dean, and told the jury, if they believed he published the tract, they must render a general verdict of guilty. The words of reason and power of the great barrister, and his piercing eyes, which riveted everything within their gaze, went with them to their room. They returned a verdict in these words : "Guilty of publishing only." The astonished judge ordered them out again, with directions to render a general verdict of guilty. Erskine interposed, and insisted upon their right to render such a verdict as they had. The judge replied tartly, and the jury retired. Again they came in with the same verdict. The judge reprimanded them, while Erskine insisted that their verdict should be recorded. Buller retorted, explained his

law to the refractory jury, and sent them out. The third time they appeared with the same verdict. The judge grew furious, and said, unless they rendered a general verdict, he should order the clerk to enter it "guilty." Erskine protested in strong terms. Buller ordered him to sit down. Erskine said he would not sit down, nor would he allow the court to record a verdict of guilty against his client, when the jury had rendered no such verdict. Buller hinted at commitment. Erskine defied him. The jury were frightened, and, in their panic, assented to a general verdict of guilty.* Erskine excepted, and carried the case to the full bench. But the day of triumph was at hand. So clearly had he in his great arguments exposed the iniquity of the rule (if, indeed, it was law at all), and so pertinaciously had he contested it on the trial of the Dean, that Parliament passed a declaratory act soon after (thus admitting that Erskine was right), giving jurors, in these prosecutions, the power to render a verdict upon the whole offence charged; that is, making them "judges of the law as well as the fact." I need not say that, after this, prosecutions for seditious libels became less potent weapons in the hands of royal and ministerial persecutors, and reformers breathed freer.

It does the heart good to contemplate talents like Erskine's devoted to such purposes. To see the foremost lawyer of his time, in the midst of wide-spread aristocratic clamour, and despite the fulminations of king, and ministers, and judges, take the side of humble men, who were denounced as incendiaries, agrarians, levellers, French Jacobins, traitors, and infidels, plotting to murder their sovereign, overthrow the throne, and prostrate the altars of the church (and these are but a tithe of the catalogue), and for years perform prodigies of labour for poor clients and poorer pay, thus blocking up the avenues to preferment in his cherished profession, and all for the love he bore the common cause! Such a spectacle should do somewhat to blunt the edge of those taunts so constantly aimed at a profession which he loved

* This scene is given from memory, the report not being at hand.

and adorned, and which, in every struggle for human rights, has furnished leaders to the popular party among the bravest of the brave. The law, like every other profession, has its scum and its dross, and yields its share of dishonest men. But they are dishonest not because they are lawyers, but because they are scoundrels, and would have been so, whether they had chosen to be merchants, physicians, or horse-jockeys. When reproaching the whole legal fraternity, it might be well to remember that some of the most conspicuous martyrs of English freedom, in the olden times, were lawyers—that Erskine, Romilly, Mackintosh, Jeffrey, and Brougham, of later and milder days, were lawyers. It is indeed the proud boast of England, that in the darkest days of oppression, her liberty has been achieved, not by appeals to the rights of man, but to the rights of Englishmen, as recognised by her own charters and laws.

But we must leave Mr. Erskine with the remark, that he possessed ability and learning to maintain the boldest positions; eloquence for the most thrilling appeals; imagination to sustain the loftiest flights. He was graceful in action, melodious in elocution, and had an eye of whose fascinating power jurors were often heard to speak. He was a wit and a logician—a lawyer and a reformer—a man, cast in the noblest mould of his species.

Mr. Erskine was powerfully sustained in his efforts for law reform by the great liberal leader in the House of Commons. CHARLES JAMES FOX deserves a conspicuous place among the early Reformers of England. Entering Parliament in 1768, when only twenty-one years of age, he rallied under Burke, then the chief debater on the Whig side, whose lead he followed through the doubtful contest on American questions; and when victory, and peace, and independence crowned their efforts, the chief resigned the standard of opposition to the hands of his younger and more robust lieutenant. Fox is called “the disciple of Burke,” and, after their unnatural estrangement, he gratefully said, “I have learnt more from Burke alone than from all other men and authors.” He remained in the Com-

mons till his death, in 1806; and though sometimes hampered by family connections and the leadership of his party, his generous nature and warm heart, through nearly forty years of Parliamentary life, carried his great talents to the liberal side. He headed the forlorn hope of English freedom during the panic immediately following the French Revolution, and in the darkest and stormiest nights of that gloomy period his voice sounded clear and firm above the tempest, hurling defiance at his foes, and bidding the few friends of man and constitutional liberty who stood around him be of good cheer, for the day of their deliverance was near. His speeches against the stamp act, the taxation of the colonies, the American war, the test act, the suspension of the *habeas corpus*, the treason and sedition bills, the slave trade; and those in favour of Parliamentary reform, religious toleration, Catholic emancipation, the rights of juries, and of peace, will long make his name dear to the friends of humanity in both hemispheres. As Erskine was the ablest advocate that ever stood at the English bar, so Fox may be esteemed the foremost in its Commons. Burke wrote of him, after their separation: "I knew him when he was nineteen; since which, he has risen to be the most brilliant and accomplished debater the world ever saw." His argumentative powers were of the highest order, and his wit, his invective, and his appeals to the judgment and feelings, unrivalled. In the partisan warfare of extemporaneous debate, he bore down on his antagonists with an energy which, when fully roused, bordered on vehemence. But it was the vehemence of impassioned logic and intense reasoning. Not content with once going over the ground in controversy, he travelled it again and again, unfolding new arguments and adding additional facts, till his searching and vigorous eloquence had discovered and demolished every objection that lay in his track. The very impersonation of the reasoning element in man: he saw through his subject with rapid glances, grappled sturdily with all its strong points, despised mere ornaments, rejected all bewildering flights of the imagination, and shunned excus-

sions into collateral fields which skirted his line of argument. In these latter respects, he was totally unlike his great master. As his reasoning powers were cast in the most colossal mould, so his heart was of the finest and noblest quality. Mackintosh has justly said, that "he united in a most remarkable degree the seemingly repugnant characters of the mildest of men and the most vehement of orators." His appeals to magnanimity, to generosity, to integrity, to justice, to mercy, thrilled the soul of Freedom, while the tide of scornful invective which he poured on hypocrisy, meanness, dissimulation, cruelty, and oppression, made the grovellers at the footstool of power hide with fear and shame. He was a statesman of the broadest and most liberal views. His capacious mind was stored with political knowledge; he had deeply studied the institutions of ancient and modern states; and no man better understood the general and constitutional history of his own country, nor the delicate machinery which regulated its complicated foreign and domestic affairs. As bold as a lion, he never cowered before the King, his ministers, or his minions; but gloried in being the mouth-piece of out-door reformers, whose political principles and humble connections prevented their admission within the Parliamentary walls. He repeated the extreme opinions of Cartwright and his companions, in a place whose doors they were forbidden to pass, but in language worthy of the classic scion of Holland House. He was of invaluable service to the reform party, in gaining them favour with the aristocratic and learned Whigs, because he could confer on their principles the force of argument, adorn them with the graces of scholarship, and dignify them with a lustre brighter than that of birth and station.

Mr. Fox was totally unlike his great rival. Pitt was stately, taciturn, and of an austere temper. Fox was easy, social, and of a kindly disposition. Pitt was tall and grave, and, entering the House carefully dressed, walked proudly to the head of the Treasury bench, and took his seat as dignified and silent as a statue. Fox was burly and jovial,

entered the House in a slouched hat and with a familiar air, and, as he approached the Opposition benches, had a nod for this learned member, and a joke for that wealthy knight of the shire, and sat down, as much at ease as if he were lounging in the back parlour of a country inn. Pitt, as the adage runs, could "speak a King's speech off-hand," so consecutive were his sentences; and his round, smooth periods delighted refined men of all parties. Fox made the Lords of the Treasury quail as he declaimed in piercing tones against ministerial corruption, while his friends shouted "hear, hear!" and applauded till the House rang. Pitt's sentences were sonorous, but too often "their sound revealed their own hollowness." Fox uttered sturdy Anglo-Saxon sense—every word pregnant with meaning. Pitt was a thorough business man, and relied for success in debate upon careful preparation. Fox despised the tinsel of rhetoric, and relied upon his intuitive perceptions and his robust strength. Pitt was the abler Secretary—Fox the greater Commoner. Pitt's oratory might be compared to the frozen stalactites which glitter around Niagara in mid-winter, stately, clear, and cold; Fox's was like the vehement waters which sweep over its brink, and roar and boil in the abyss below. Pitt, in his great efforts, only erected himself the more proudly, and uttered more full Johnsonian sentences, sprinkling his dignified but monotonous "state-paper style" with pungent sarcasms, speaking as one having authority, and commanding that it might stand fast. Fox on such occasions reasoned from first principles, denouncing where he could not persuade, and rousing himself under his great thoughts, until his excited feelings rocked him, like the ocean in a storm. Pitt displayed the most rhetoric, and his mellow voice charmed, like the notes of an organ. Fox displayed the most argument, and his deep tones pierced like arrows. Pitt had art; Fox nature. Pitt was dignified, cool, cautious; Fox manly, generous, brave. Yet, after all, not a little of this remarkable difference may be summed up in the fact, that Pitt was the Minister of the King; Fox the Champion of the People. Both were the

early advocates of Parliamentary reform ; but Pitt retreated, while Fox advanced ; and both joined in denouncing and abolishing the horrors of the middle passage. Both died the same year, and they sleep side by side in Westminster Abbey, their dust mingling with that of their mutual friend Wilberforce ; while over their tombs seems to watch with eagle eye and extended arm the form of the elder Pitt, the great Chatham.

CHAPTER V.

The French Revolution—The Continental Policy of Mr. Pitt—The Policy of Mr. Fox and his followers—The Continental Wars—Mr. Sheridan—Mr. Burke—Mr. Perceval.

IN determining whether the policy which Pitt and his successors pursued towards France, from 1792 to 1815, was wise for England and beneficial to Europe, a friend of liberal politics will remember that it was sustained by the party which ever resisted all social and political improvement among the people ; that the enemies of change warred on the Directory, the Consulate, the Empire ; that the patrons of existing abuses restored the Bourbons. Nor will he forget that this policy was steadily opposed by the friends of enlightened progress and useful reform—the champions of civil and religious freedom. The specious reasoning and showy declamations of a score of Alisons will never destroy these facts.

France, equally with Great Britain, had the right to enjoy the government of its choice ; but the latter, early in 1793, declined to negotiate or correspond with the former, because it was a republic, and, refusing to receive the credentials of its minister, ordered him to quit the kingdom. France, sustained by the usage of nations, declared war against the power which had insulted her. Pitt asserted that the French Revolution had no sufficient cause in the nature of the

government, or the condition of the people, and was the offspring of a reckless spirit of innovation. He avowed his determination to put down the republic, restore the monarchy, and maintain the cause of legitimacy in Europe. This avowal was met by the declaration of the liberal party that the true cause of the Revolution was the undue restriction and limitation of the rights and privileges of the people; and that, however it might be perverted, its real object was to wrest from the government what had been unjustly withheld from its subjects. They demanded, therefore, that the diplomatic representative of France should be received by the ministry, and they resisted all interference with its internal affairs—all attempts to suppress liberal movements in Europe—all efforts to uphold its crumbling thrones. They pleaded for peace and an armed neutrality; and after Napoleon's schemes of conquest were disclosed, they contended that England ought not to unite in a coalition for his overthrow, so long as it was a battle among kings, but should wait till *the people* of the continent requested assistance; and even then, that it ought not to be given till the rulers of the endangered states were pledged to grant reasonable privileges to their subjects. On this elevated ground did the liberal party take its stand. But Pitt, representing only the monarchical and privileged orders, at the outset of the conflict pledged the power and resources of England to the accomplishment of his ends; and his policy was steadily followed, with ruinous and mortifying results, until the European combination of 1814-15 finally crushed Napoleon at Waterloo, and restored the Bourbon to his throne.

And what did England gain by her armies and fleets, her intrigues in foreign cabinets, and the enormous addition to her debt of £600,000,000 in doing it. At the commencement of the war her national debt was less than £240,000,000. At its close it had swelled to more than £840,000,000! This is independent of the hundreds of millions raised in war-taxes during the protracted conflict. Centuries of taxation to restore the Bourbons to a throne which they could not

retain, and to postpone for fifty years the general overthrow of absolutism in Europe! The seventh descending son of the youngest Englishman alive will execrate the day that Pitt entered on this crusade against destiny. When the unnatural fever of the contest abated, the reaction, the retribution, came. Peace had returned, but she was not accompanied by her twin-sister, Plenty. English trade, commerce, manufactures, agriculture, languished ; labourers wandered through the provinces in search of employment ; the country sunk exhausted, as if on the eve of general bankruptcy. The smoke of battle no longer blinding the eye, the people began to look about and inquire, "What have we gained by all this waste of blood and treasure?" The wealthy saw before them ages of remorseless taxation—the poor clamoured in the streets for bread ; all but the extreme privileged classes regarded the result of the war as a triumph over themselves. At peace with all the world (almost the first time for three-fourths of a century), the nation was the scene of internal discords more threatening than foreign levy. Nothing but general lassitude, and the pressure of misfortunes common to all, prevented a revolution.

This contest was injurious to England in another way. It so possessed the public mind that there was little room left for domestic improvement. Meanwhile the cause of reform was turned out of doors. The French Revolution was a stock-in-trade to Pitt and the Tories. Seizing upon its early excesses, they conjured with them for thirty years, frightening timid men from their propriety, and terrifying even the giant soul of Burke. The "horrors of the French Revolution" were thrown in the face of every man who demanded reform. The clamours of the tired and fleeced suitors in Lord Eldon's court were silenced by "the horrors of the French Revolution." Old Sarum and Grampound lengthened out their "rotten" existence by supping "on the horrors of the French Revolution ;" and the same argument served to delay the reforms long demanded in the Church Establishment. The Catholics were persecuted, the Irish rebels gibeted, and printers transported, to atone for "the horrors of

the French Revolution." In a word, these "horrors" constituted the chief staple of Tory argument and declamation, and were a conclusive answer to all who asked for cheap bread, religious toleration, law reform, reduced taxes, and an enlarged suffrage.

The lessons of wisdom, so dearly purchased by this scheme of Continental interference, have not been thrown away on a nation which spent so much to gain so little. The second French Revolution was followed by England granting Parliamentary Reform, to prevent a revolution at home. The third Revolution, which prostrated a monarchy, and reared a republic in a day, was promptly recognised and respected by England, whose Premier declared that she unhesitatingly accorded to the people of France the right to ordain for themselves such a system of government as they might choose! Men may prate about the virtues of Louis XVI., the grasping ambition of Napoleon, the far-seeing sagacity of Burke, and the wisdom and firmness of Pitt, and it will still remain true, that principles were thrown up with the fire and blood of the great French eruption which are immortal, and will yet work out the regeneration of Europe.

Mr. SHERIDAN was as steady a supporter of freedom, and as inflexible an opponent of Pitt, as a man of so volatile a temperament could well be. This gentleman is better known as the author of the comedy, the "School for Scandal," and of a speech on the trial of Warren Hastings, than as a philosophical statesman. The comedy still holds a high place on the stage. The speech, which once claimed a position at the head of English forensic oratory, was no doubt much overrated. The intense interest pervading the public mind in respect to the impeachment of the conqueror and ruler of fifty millions of the people of India—the august character of the tribunal, the peers and judges of the realm—the imposing talents of the committee by whom the Commons sent up the articles of impeachment, consisting of Burke, Fox, North, Grey, Wyndham, Sheridan, with other lights worthy to shine in such a constellation—the romance attaching to the eastern scene of Hastings' administration, all added a sicc-

titious lustre to Sheridan's opening address; the gorgeous colours which he spread upon the Oriental canvass, and the theatrical style in which he pronounced his oration before a sympathizing audience, all conspired to give to his effort a temporary fame, alike extraordinary and undeserved. Nor was the immediate effect of his prolonged address of two days diminished by the tragical manner in which he contrived, at its close, to sink backward into the arms of Burke, as if worn out in his great effort in the cause of the oppressed.

But though he occasionally resorted to such theatrical effect, Sheridan was a debater to be shunned rather than encountered. Pitt dreaded him. Lying in wait till the minister had addressed the house, the Drury Lane manager used to let fly at him such a cloud of stinging arrows, pointed with sarcasm and poisoned with invective, that the stately Premier could not conceal his mortification, and hardly retained his seat till the storm had passed away. No debater ever inspired so much dread in his opponents, and won so much applause from his friends, with so scanty a stock of statesmanlike acquirements. His political knowledge was gathered from the columns of the current newspapers and the discussions in the club-rooms, and his literary stores were made up from the modern poetry and drama of England. True, he was educated at Harrow, but he threw aside Demosthenes and Cicero for Congreve and Vanburgh, and wrote comedies when he should have studied mathematics. He never claimed to be a statesman, and only aspired to be an orator. He bent all the powers of his acute and elastic mind to shine as a dazzling declaimer. He attended debating clubs, and caught up the best sayings—practised attitudes and tones in the green-room—set down every keen thought which occurred to him in a note-book—conned his lesson—then entered the House, and rushing into the arena of debate with the bound and air of a gladiator, won the reputation of being the readiest wit, the most skilful off-hand disputant, and the most gorgeous orator of the day. And it was the day of Burke, Pitt, Fox, Erskine, Grat-

tan, and Wyndham! Lord Chesterfield was not so far wrong when he told his son that, even in Parliament, more depended upon the manner of saying a thing, than upon the matter of which it was composed. Though Sheridan's taste was formed on the flashy model of the modern drama, and in the composition of his numerous tropes and metaphors he did not always distinguish between tinsel and gold, between painted glass and true jewels, yet he generally succeeded in doing what he intended—producing a tremendous sensation. His rockets set the hemisphere in a blaze; nor was he always careful on whose head the sticks fell; for he spared neither friends nor foes, when he would thereby lose a good hit.

Though Sheridan regarded the colour of the husk more than the character of the kernel, he uttered much that is still well worthy of re-perusal. In an attack on Ministers, who were attempting to carry a bill against the freedom of the press, he exclaimed, "Give them a corrupt House of Lords; give them a venal House of Commons; give them a tyrannical Prince; give them a truckling Court—and let me have but an unfettered press, and I will defy them to encroach a hair's breadth upon the liberties of England"—a passage worthy of Chatham. During the treason trials in 1794, he poured a torrent of ridicule upon the proceedings, which served not a little toward restoring a panic-stricken public to its senses. An extract will give an idea of his sarcasm. In replying to Pitt, he said: "I own there was something in the case, quite enough to disturb the virtuous sensibilities and loyal terrors of the right honourable gentleman. But so hardened is this side of the House, that our fears did not much disturb us. On the first trial, one pike was produced. This was, however, withdrawn. Then a terrific instrument was talked of, for the annihilation of his Majesty's cavalry, which, upon evidence, appeared to be a *tcc-totum* in a window at Sheffield. But I had forgot—there was also a camp in a back shop; an arsenal provided with nine muskets; and an exchequer, containing exactly the same number of pounds—no, let me be accurate, it was

nine pounds and one bad shilling. The alarm had been brought in with great pomp and circumstance on a Saturday morning. At night, the Duke of Richmond stationed himself, among other curiosities, at the Tower, and a great municipal officer, the Lord Mayor, made an appalling discovery in the East. He found out that there was in Cornhill a debating society, where people went to buy treason at sixpence a head ; where it was retailed to them by inch of candle ; and five minutes, measured by the glass, were allowed to each traitor, to perform his part in overturning the State. In Edinburgh an insurrection was planned ; the soldiers were to be corrupted : and this turned out to be—by giving each man sixpence for porter. * Now, what the scarcity of money and rations may be in that part of the country, I cannot tell ; but it does strike me that the system of corruption has not been carried to any great extent. Then, too, numbers were kept in pay ; they were drilled in a dark room, by a sergeant in a brown coat ; and on a given signal they were to sally from a back kitchen, and overturn the Constitution!"

Though this celebrated orator was wayward in his pursuits, and habitually extravagant and intemperate, yet, from the time he entered Parliament in 1780, till his decline, he ever sustained the liberal cause, and his rare talents bore with striking effect against the Continental policy of Pitt, and in favour of Irish Regeneration, Parliamentary Reform, the freedom of the press, and the rights of the people.

I have spoken of EDMUND BURKE, than whom, no man could present a stronger contrast to Sheridan. He had an original, daring genius, but it was sustained by a broad and comprehensive judgment. His imagination was as gorgeous as ever plumed the wing of eloquence, but it was enriched and invigorated by learning vast and varied. Until his mind became engrossed, not to say possessed, with the subject which occupied the latter years of his great life (the French Revolution), he was the advocate and ornament of progressive freedom. He first led and then followed Fox in every line of policy which the liberal party pursued from 1765 to

1790, when they separated, and Burke became not so much the advocate of Pitt and his Tories, as the opponent of France and its Republicans; choosing thereafter, as he expressed it, to be a Whig, "without coining to himself Whig principles from a French die, unknown to the impress of our fathers in the Constitution." He left Parliament in 1794, and died in 1797. During the last six years of his life he seemed almost diseased by the excesses of the French Revolution; and whatever subject he surveyed, on whatever ground he looked, he appeared to see naught but the convulsions of that tragedy. The vivid impressions which he received he transferred to publications which glowed with his fervid soul, and produced a prodigious sensation amongst the higher orders of his countrymen. But take him all in all, his was the most magnificent mind of modern England. If called to designate the most remarkable name which adorns its later annals, to whose would we so unhesitatingly point as to his? Is he not entitled to a place among the most extraordinary men which that kingdom has produced—Bacon, Shakspeare, Cromwell, Milton, Newton, Burke? He possessed the multifarious learning of the American Adams, the intellectual grasp of their Marshall, the metaphysical subtlety of their Edwards, the logical energy of their Webster, the soaring imagination of their Wirt, the fervid glow of their Clay; and he was the equal of each in his most cultivated field. As a Parliamentary leader, he was inferior to Fox and Pitt. His essay-like style was not adapted to so popular a body as the House of Commons. His speeches wore the air of the academy rather than the forum; and much of his discourse was too elaborate, too learned, too philosophical, too ornate, to be appreciated by the general run of commonplace men that find their way into the halls of legislation. During the thirty years he participated in public affairs, there fell from his lips and pen an amount of political sagacity, far-seeing statesmanship, philosophical disquisition, and oratorical display, all set off and adorned by an amplitude of learning, a majesty of diction, and a brilliancy of imagery, the fourth of which would have carried their

author's name to posterity as one of the remarkable men of his time. He who thinks this eulogium extravagant, has only to mark its confirmation in the mines of intellectual wealth which lie embedded in the sixteen volumes of the works he has given to his country and the world, to his cotemporaries, and to posterity. True, there will be found, mingled with these strata of pure gold, veins of impracticability, sophistry, prejudice, extravagance, and violence. His later writings, and in many respects his most grand and beautiful, are disfigured by a morbid dread of change, and obscured by a gloomy distrust of the capacities of man for self-government; proving, that though gifted with genius beyond most mortals; he was not endowed with the divine spirit of prophecy. But it is equally true, that while the English language is read, the speeches and writings of Edmund Burke will be classed with the richest treasures of the statesman, the philosopher, and the scholar.

Next to the curse of a military chieftain attempting to adapt the tactics of the camp to the regulations of the cabinet, is the nuisance of a narrow-minded lawyer carrying the formal rules of the bar into the councils of the State, and aiming to be a statesman when he is only capable of being a pettifogger. On the downfall of the Grenville-Fox ministry, Mr. PERCEVAL took the leading place in his Majesty's Government. He was a lawyer with a keen intellect, and a soul shrivelled by the most limited views and bigoted prejudices. When ruling England, he looked upon her position in reference to Continental affairs, and the part she was to perform in the drama of nations, much as he was wont to regard the case of a plaintiff whose brief and retainer he held. He argued the great questions which nightly agitated the House of Commons, and whose decisions were to affect not only his own time, but coming ages, like a mere lawyer struggling for a verdict. His weapon was sharp, and he applied its edge in the same way, whether analyzing the title of James Jackson to a ten-acre plot in Kent, or of Louis XVIII. to the throne of France. He discussed a financial scheme in

Parliament to raise twenty millions sterling to carry on the war, just as he had argued the consideration of a twenty-pound debt before a jury of Yorkshire ploughmen. Yet he was a good tactician; saw a point readily and clearly, though he saw nothing but a *point*; knew how to touch the prejudices of bigots; was great at beating his opponents on small divisions; rarely lost his temper under the severest provocations; was quick at a turn, and keen at a retort; and spoke in a lively, colloquial, straightforward style, which pleased the country gentlemen much better than did the classical allusions and ornate periods of Mr. Canning. He kept on the even tenor of his way successfully till assassinated by a madman in the lobby of the House, in 1812.

Such was the man who shaped the financial policy of England during six of the most eventful years of her existence, and whom she permitted to plunge her into debt to the amount of £150,000,000! “How could this be?” The answer is plain. Mr. Perceval stood firmly by the Crown and the Church, flattering the prejudices of the one, and the exclusiveness of the other; and never flinched from eulogizing royalty, when the rude hand of popular clamour drew the veil from the immoralities of the Prince Regent and his brother of York. Besides this, he was a thorough business man; never alarmed his party by wandering, like Canning and Peel, out of the beaten Tory track; and, so far from giving up a bad cause in the worst of times, ho raised his voice the more sternly as the storm of public discontent grew louder, and cheered his flagging comrades to the contest. Such a minister was fit to win the favour of the Court at a time when few men in power had learned to discriminate between the insensate furor of revolutionary heat, and the just demands for the reform of abuses.

CHAPTER VI.

Pitt's Continental Policy—Mr. Tierney—Mr. Whitbread—Lord Castlereagh—
Lord Liverpool—Mr. Canning.

IN examining a little further among the statesmen who opposed the Continental policy of Mr. Pitt and his successors—though by no means intending to notice all who thus distinguished themselves—a less notorious person than Mr. Sheridan attracts the eye; but one who, when we regard the solid, everyday qualities of the mind, greatly surpassed the showy blandishments of that celebrated orator. I allude to Mr. TIERNEY. Like Mr. Perceval, he was bred to the bar; but, unlike him, he was not a mere lawyer, nor was his comprehension hemmed in by narrow prejudices, nor his soul shrivelled by bigotry. Though his reputation is dim when compared with other luminaries that shone in that Whig constellation in the dawn of the present century, yet it would be difficult to name one who shed a more steady and useful light along the path of the liberal party, during the first ten years of that century—always excepting Mr. Fox. Mr. Tierney was foremost among the reformers in the perilous times of the treason trials in 1794—was a prominent member of the society of “Friends of the People”—penned the admirable petition to Parliament, in which that association demonstrated the necessity and safety of an enlarged suffrage, and an equal representation—and, having attained a highly respectable standing at the bar, entered Parliament in 1796, the year before Fox and the heads of the Opposition unwisely abandoned their attendance upon the House, because they despaired of arresting the course of Pitt. Mr. Tierney was at once brought into a prominent position. He took up the gauntlet, and during two or three sessions was the main leader of the remnant of the Whigs who stood to their posts; and he showed himself competent to the occasion

thus opened to him. Night after night he headed the diminished band, arraying the rigid reasoning powers and tireless business habits which he brought from the bar, against the haughty eloquence of Pitt and the dry arguments of Dundas, blunting the cold sarcasms of the former with his inimitable humour, and thrusting his keen analytical weapon between the loose joints of the latter's logical harness. He was Solicitor-General of Mr. Addington's mixed administration; but the dissolution of that alliance soon relieved him from a cramped position, whence he gladly escaped to the broader field of untrammeled opposition. Here he did manful service in the popular cause, heedless of the blocking up of all avenues to advancement, both in the comparatively secluded walks of the profession which he ornamented, and the more conspicuous paths of polities, which he delighted to tread. During a part of the dark night of the Continental Coalition, he guided the helm of his party with a skill and vigilance which its more renowned chiefs might have profitably imitated. His ability to master the details, as well as to trace the outlines, of a complicated subject (so essential to success at the bar), induced his colleagues to devolve upon him the labour of exposing those suicidal schemes of finance by which Pitt and his successors drained the life-blood of England's prosperity, and swelled a debt which the sale of every rood of its soil could hardly discharge. Thus he acquired a knowledge of trade and finance, second only to that of the later Mr. Huskisson. It is meet that the unassuming talents and services of such a man, "faithful among the faithless," should not be overlooked when naming the modern reformers of England.

I have spoken of MR. WHITBREAD. Some who have not looked into the Parliamentary history of the times we are now glancing over suppose him to have been merely a great brewer, who purchased a seat in the House of Commons by his wealth. But he possessed an intellect of the most vigorous frame, which had been cultivated by a liberal education, and informed by extensive foreign travel. He was the companion and counsellor of Fox, Erskine, Sheri-

dan, Grey, Mackintosh, Romilly, and Brougham—a frequent visiter at Holland House—a ready and strong debater, always foremost in the conflicts of those violent times—for a short period the trusted leader of his party in the House—and in 1814, when the quarrel between the imprudent Caroline and her husband came to an open rupture, he was selected, with Brougham, to be her confidential adviser and friend. Generous in the diffusion of his vast wealth—gentle and kindly in his affections—the warm friend of human freedom, and the sworn foe of oppression in all its forms—he gave his entire powers to the cause of progress and reform, and resisted, in all places, at all seasons, and when others quailed, the foreign policy of Pitt, Perceval, and Castlereagh. The return of Napoleon from Elba alarmed all classes of Englishmen, and for the moment swept all parties from their moorings. An Address to the Throne for an enlargement of the forces was immediately moved by Grenville in the Lords, and Grattan in the Commons (both Whigs), and supported by a large majority of the panic-struck Opposition. Whitbread stood firm; and, though denounced as a traitor and a French Jacobin, made an able speech in favour of his motion that England ought not to interfere for the restoration of the Bourbons. Such a fact illustrates the inflexible metal of the man, more than a column of panegyric. His political principles approached the standard of democracy; and this, with his plebeian extraction and blunt manners, gave him less favour with some of the patricians of his party than with their common constituency. He died in 1815.

Many worthy and not a few illustrious names might find a place here. Grey, the dignified and uncompromising—Romilly, the sagacious and humane—Mackintosh, the classical and ornate—Grattan, the chivalrous and daring—Burdett, the once manly and bold—Horner, the learned and modest—Holland, the polished and generous—Brougham, the versatile and strong—all of whom, with others scarcely less notable, sustained the drooping cause of freedom against the policy of Pitt and his followers, and kept alive the sacred

fires, to break out brightly in happier times. But each may be noticed in other connections. We will now speak of three statesmen of a different school.

LORD CASTLEREAGH was the life and soul of Pitt's Continental policy during the six years before Napoleon fell. Like Sheridan, he was an Irishman; but, unlike him, he resisted every measure which promised to bless his native country, with the skill of a politician, and the bitterness of an adversary. Keenly, and indeed bigotedly, attached to a state of things which reserved nearly all power in the hands of the Crown, he resented every popular movement as a crime. With few scruples as to the means to be employed, he was only too ready to bribe, bully, or butcher, and plunged England deeper and deeper into debt and into blood. It has been contended by those least disposed to be charitable towards their political opponents, that Perceval was an honest bigot; at least as honest as any man could be who performed so many questionable acts. But it has been the misfortune of Castlereagh to bear all the odium of his party, and to receive credit for their most unscrupulous deeds; so that he has been pronounced as, beyond all question, one of the most despicable Irishmen of the nineteenth century. The name of no other modern statesman is so cordially detested by the mass of the people. With no eloquence—utterly incapable of cutting even a second-rate figure as a Parliamentary debater—yet, because of his intimate acquaintance with public affairs, his blunt sense, promptness in council, unflinching courage, his unfaltering attachment to the throne, and his unscrupulous execution of its wishes, he led the Tory party in the Commons, and controlled the counsels of the King, through eleven of the most turbulent years in England's recent history. Though not the nominal Premier, he was the real head of the ministry during the war with America, and in the times which preceded and followed the overthrow of Bonaparte, and bore a leading share in the subsequent transactions which assumed the name of "the pacification of Europe." At the Congress of Vienna he represented the power which had staked

all, and nearly lost all, in restoring the Bourbons. This gave him the right to demand, in her name, that the victories she had bought or won should redound to the advancement of constitutional liberty, and might have enabled him still to secure for England a proud place as the generous arbiter of the destinies of Europe. But so far from bearing himself in a manner worthy of his great constituency, he succumbed to the dictation of Russia and Austria, and aided them in forming the misnamed Holy Alliance, that politico-military Inquisition for “the settlement of Europe.” His subsequent course in endorsing the military *surveillance* which this Holy Inquisition exercised over the people of Europe, encountered the hostility of the whole liberal party of England, whose leaders made the island ring with their protests. At length this bold, unscrupulous politician, having opposed the abolition of the slave trade, the amelioration of the criminal code, the modification of the corn laws, Catholic emancipation, Parliamentary reform, and every other social and political improvement, during twenty-five years, suddenly finished his own career, which had been marked at every step by such unpopular deeds. Immediately thereupon, Mr. Canning, who succeeded to his place as Foreign Secretary, filed his protest against certain proceedings of the Holy Alliance, and England withdrew from that conspiracy of royal despots.

Throughout the period just mentioned, LORD LIVERPOOL was the nominal head of the Ministry. He was a very respectable nobleman, with a large purse and few talents; an amiable, easy, but uninfluential man, to whom every Whig and Tory made a low bow, but whom nobody feared or cared for; a pilot that could steer the ship of State tolerably well in quiet waters, but who was ready to abandon the helm the instant the sky was overcast, or the waves raged. He was in office so long that he became a sort of ministerial fixture — a kind of nucleus around which more ambitious, showy, and potent materials gathered. People had become so accustomed to see him at the head of affairs, where he did so little as to offend no one, that they looked upon him as

almost as necessary to the working of the government machine as the King himself. This commonplace man, under the successive names of Mr. Jenkinson, Lord Hawkesbury, and Lord Liverpool, held important stations in the Cabinet more than thirty years, during nearly half of which he was Premier.

Mr. CANNING succeeded Lord Castlereagh as Foreign Secretary in 1823, and Lord Liverpool as Premier in 1827. Like Castlereagh, Canning was of Irish descent, and had Irish blood in his veins. Like him, he sustained the Continental policy of Pitt; but, unlike him, he did not degrade England after she had destroyed Napoleon. Like him, he exercised great sway in the councils of the country; but it was not so much the influence of mere official station or business habits, as the voluntary tribute paid to a splendid and captivating genius. For thirty-five years this remarkable man participated in public affairs; and whatever opinion may be formed of his statesmanship, he was, undoubtedly, one of the most brilliant orators that has appeared in the House of Commons during the present century.

Canning's father was a broken-down Irish barrister, who, having little knowledge of law, and less practice, quitted Ireland for London, where he eked out a scanty existence by poetical contributions to the magazines, and tolerable pamphlets for the politicians. He died the day his son George was a year old, April 11, 1771. The mother, left penniless, listened to the flatteries of Garrick, went upon the stage, tried to sustain first-rate characters, failed, sunk into a secondary position, married a profligate and dissipated actor, who, after strolling about the provinces a few years, died in a mad-house; when she married a stage-smitten silk mercer, who had a little more money than her late husband, and a rather better character. Failing in business soon after, he tried the stage in company with his wife, where he speedily broke down, and she continued for some years to figure in third-rate characters at the minor theatres. In such strange company as would naturally surround such guardians, the future Prime Minister of England spent the first

nine or ten years of his life. He had a respectable paternal uncle in London—a merchant of some wealth. An old actor, of the name of Moody, detected the sparks of genius in the lad, went to this uncle, and urged him to take his nephew (whom he had never seen) under his care. He complied, sent him to a grammar school, then to Eton, and, dying, left the means of educating his ward at Oxford. Young Canning shone conspicuously at the university, as a wit, an elocutionist, and a poet, and contracted some aristocratic friendships, which served his turn in subsequent life, especially that with Mr. Jenkinson, afterwards Lord Liverpool.

After he left the university, he became intimate with Sheridan, who knew something of his mother and his own history, and by him was introduced to Fox and other leading Whigs. Though impregnated with liberal principles, his ambitious eye saw that Whiggism was an obscured luminary, and so he turned and worshipped the ascendant star of Pitt. Entering Parliament in 1793, just at the bursting of the continental storm, he at once took his seat on the Treasury benches, and soon became a polished shaft in the quiver of the great anti-Gallican archer. In or out of office, he followed the fortunes of Pitt and his successors, till he quarrelled and fought a duel with Castlereagh, in 1809, when they both left the Cabinet, and Canning remained under a cloud till 1814, when he proceeded as Minister to the Court of Lisbon. From this time, he never had the full confidence of the old school Tories, though he was their most brilliant advocate in Parliament, and generally shared office with them, and sustained their measures. After Castlereagh's death, Mr. Canning drew closely around him the more liberal Tories—such as Lords Melbourne, Palmerston, and Glenelg—and made up, in conjunction with Mr. Huskisson, a “third party,” called “Canningites,” who, through the auspices of Brougham, in 1827, formed a *quasi* coalition with the Whigs. After the death of their chief, many of his followers went completely over to the Whigs, aided Earl Grey in carrying the Reform Bill, took

office under him, and subsequently shared in all the movements of that party.

With the exception of giving a hearty support to the abolition of the slave trade, and advocating the cause of Catholic emancipation, Mr. Canning sustained the worst Tory measures from his entrance into Parliament till the death of Castlereagh—a period of thirty years—bringing to bear against the people's cause all the resources of his classical learning, vivid wit, vigorous reasoning, captivating manners, and unrivalled oratory. Undoubtedly, he despised the truckling course of Castlereagh towards the Holy Alliance; and, either because he wished to escape from “a false position,” or because his colleagues desired to cripple his influence, he was just about to go out to India as Governor-General, when the removal of Castlereagh altered his destination, and he exchanged a subordinate foreign station for the chief control of that department of affairs. Immediately, England took a nobler position toward the Continental alliance, in which she had been entangled by his wily predecessor. The new Secretary protested against the interference of the allied sovereigns with the popular movements in Spain, and early the next year, 1824, stated in his place that Ministers had refused to become parties to another Congress. This was the boldest advance which had been made for thirty years, and well might the House of Commons ring with enthusiastic plaudits. This was promptly followed by the virtual recognition of the independence of the new South American republics, another blow at the military inquisition designated the Holy Alliance. Calling Mr. Robinson to his aid as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Mr. Huskisson as President of the Board of Trade, the reorganized Ministry (good, easy Lord Liverpool being its nominal head) adopted a more liberal policy in commerce and finance, which, coupled with its course in foreign affairs, drew to it a large share of the confidence of the middle classes, and softened the asperities of the Opposition. During the four years that Canning controlled Liverpool's ministry, taxes were reduced, some restrictions removed from

trade, the endless delays in Chancery inquired into, the death penalty curtailed, resolutions passed with a view to slave emancipation, the corn laws slightly modified, and a bill for the relief of the Roman Catholics carried in the Commons, but thrown out by the Lords. Liverpool died early in 1827. After a quarrel with Wellington and Peel, Canning, in May of that year, reached the culminating point of his ambition, the Premiership of England. But, at the end of four months of vexed and troublesome rule, he died, much lamented by the people, who were anticipating good things from his administration.

Viewed from one point of observation, Mr. Canning's later policy was favourable to the cause of reform; but, in another aspect, it may be doubted whether his half-way measures were not, in the long run, detrimental to that cause. He was able to have saved the Tory party, if they would have consented to be saved by him; for, had he lived, he would have continued gradually to yield to the advancing spirit of the age, and kept them in power many years. But their distrust of him after the peace of 1815 crippled his genius, mortified his pride, and determined him in due time to rend the faction which would not permit him to rule. Through the aid of his personal adherents, his "third party," he did for the Tories in 1826-7, what Peel did for them twenty years later—yielded to liberal opinions, split the party in twain, and formed a *quasi* coalition with his ancient opponents. Though by this means some measures, such as Catholic emancipation and Parliamentary reform, were sooner carried than they otherwise might have been, yet it may be doubted if the liberal cause would not have gained more in the end had no such coalition been formed, and no such concessions been made. Though the secession of the Canningites weakened the Tories, the accession diluted the Whigs. It ultimately gave them such leaders as Melbourne and Palmerston—men who, down to 1828, had been among the most strenuous opponents of reform. But, on the other hand, Mr. Canning broke the power of old-fashioned Toryism, the remorseless,

insolent Toryism of French revolutionary times, and introduced the more complying progressive Conservatism, which has emancipated Catholics and repealed corn laws. In truth, though Canning and Peel had the wisdom to make such timely concessions, it is obvious that some such change was inevitable, and that amid all the vast political changes which the progress of the age demanded, it was impossible that parties should retain their old forms, or depend on the tactics devised for so totally different an order of things.

Mr. Canning was like Mr. Fox in one respect. Each introduced a new era in his party. The aristocratic Whiggism of the last century, to which I have alluded, is graphically hit off by Brougham, when he says the heads of the few great families who controlled the party "never could be made to understand how a feeble motion, prefaced by a feeble speech, if made by an elderly lord, and seconded by a younger one, could fail to satisfy the country and shake the Ministry!" Fox opened the door for men without ancestry or wealth to enter the arena, and find the place to which their talents assigned them, whether at its head or its foot. He introduced the Whiggism of the type of Grey, Brougham, Romilly, Russell, and the Edinburgh Review. It has served its day and generation, and has become so like the modified Toryism of the new conservative party, that the chief distinction between them is in the difference of their names. Within the last twenty years, the people of England have advanced a century, while the Whig leaders have stood still. Yet the demand for radical changes is every day decreasing, and the desire of the people is now mainly directed to the removal of all the remaining impediments which prevent their representatives from working out the details of the great movements, the essential principles of which are now universally admitted.

To return to Mr. Canning. During the last five years of his life, he occupied a sort of middle ground between the ancient and the modern *regime*: or rather, was the connecting-link between the old and the new order of things. Having served under Pitt in his youth, he formed an alliance

with the disciples of Fox in his maturity. Having advocated the complete destruction of the Irish Parliament in 1799 and 1800, he proposed a qualified emancipation of its Romanists in 1823 and 1827. Having sustained the European coalition for the overthrow of Napoleon, he repudiated its legitimate offspring, the Holy Alliance. Having drained England of her wealth to nourish and maintain absolutism on the continent, he shrunk from permitting her to eat the fruit of her own culture. In these latter years, he might have been properly called either a liberal Tory or a conservative Whig. He was the friend of "Catholic emancipation;" but though public sentiment was not ripe enough during his administration to accomplish this reform, his efforts tended to bring it to that maturity which, soon after his death, enabled the proscribed sect to gather the fruit from that tree of religious toleration which his hand had aided to plant in the breast of English Protestantism. But on the vital subject of Parliamentary Reform he would yield nothing. It was in reference to this that he had his famous quarrel with Brougham, who was for many years the keenest antagonist of Canning. The point of controversy was the disfranchisement of a rotten borough, which had been convicted of bribery. Both girded themselves for the contest. Never was the rugged intensity of the one, nor the polished strength of the other, more conspicuous than on that occasion. Brougham's attack was compared to the *concave speculum*, in which every ray was concentrated with focal intensity, and poured in a burning stream upon his victim. Canning's, to the *convex mirror*, which scattered the rays, but showered them down upon his foe with blinding fervour.

Turning from the statesman to the orator, we find him occupying a place equalled by few of his contemporaries; surpassed by none. He was the Cicero of the British Senate; and, using the term *oratory* in its precise sense, he shines unrivalled among the English statesmen of our day. He is an admirable refutation of the somewhat popular error, that a *reasoner* must necessarily be dull and uninteresting—

that wit, raillery, vivid illustration, and suggestive allusions, are incompatible with sound argument—and that logic consists in a lifeless skeleton of consecutive syllogisms, divested of the flesh, blood, and marrow of eloquence.

Though few public speakers of his time dealt more with the lighter graces of oratory—wit, fancy, epigram, anecdote, historical illustration, and classical allusion—none excelled him in the clearness of his statements, the solidity of his arguments, and the skill with which he brought all his resources to bear upon the point to be reached, and the power with which he pressed it home to the conviction of his hearers. A burst of laughter from all sides, excited by his infectious wit, or a round of applause from his friends when some galling sarcasm pierced the mailed harness of the Opposition, relieved the tedium of a currency debate, intolerably dull in most hands, but which he, by mingling figures of speech with the figures of the budget, always made interesting, and not unfrequently effective for changes, of great importance and value.

But these rare qualities were not always used with moderation. So skilful a master of so bewitching an art could not be sparing in the exhibition of his peculiar powers. His pleasantry and by-play, when handling momentous questions, offended graver men, who could not believe that so much levity was consistent with sincerity. He excited the jealousy of plainer understandings, who saw things as clearly as he, but could not set them in so transparent a light. His coruscations were not only glittering, but they often dazzled and confounded less ornate minds. His sarcasms stung his enemies to madness; and, not content merely with driving his opponents to the wail, he provoked them to become the assailants; and his friends found that a brilliant attack led on by him often resulted in a counter-assault, which summoned to the rescue all the forces of his party. More than this, his port and bearing left the impression upon most minds, that a consummato artist was acting a part, and not a sincere man speaking from true feeling. His obscure origin (obscure for one who aspired to be a Tory Premier), and his

early coquetry with the Whigs, affixed to him the epithet of "an adventurer;" and he never shook off the epithet, nor effaced the impression that it was fitly bestowed. The people of England, whether he was Treasurer of the Navy, Foreign Secretary, Prime Minister, or Parliamentary orator, never wholly escaped from the suspicion that the son was following the profession of the mother, but had chosen the chapel of St. Stephen's, rather than the theatre of Drury Lane, for the display of his genius.

Turning from the orator to the man, we find much to delight the eye. George Canning never forgot the humble mother that bore him. So soon as his resources would permit, he made ample provision for her support; and for years after he entered Parliament, and even when a foreign ambassador, he wrote her a weekly epistle, breathing the kindest affection. Though he could never elevate her tastes and associations above the connections of her youth, he used to throw aside the cares of office, that he might visit her, and the humble cousins with whom she dwelt, at Bath; and there, when in the zenith of his fame, would walk out with his plebeian relatives, and receive the homage of the lordly visitants at that fashionable resort, in their company. This marks him a noble man. He delighted in literary pursuits—would drop the pen when preparing a diplomatic despatch, to talk over the classics with his university acquaintances. He was also a brilliant essayist, and wrote Latin and English verses with grace and beauty.

CHAPTER VII.

Abolition of the African Slave Trade—Granville Sharpe—Wilberforce—Pitt—Stephen—Macaulay—Brougham.

In tracing the foreign policy of Pitt, we have been led beyond the period of the great philanthropic achievement of 1806-7—the abolition of the African Slave Trade. I shall not trace

the origin and growth of this traffic, nor describe its horrors, nor detail the measures, in and out of Parliament, which led to its legal prohibition. They are familiar to those who will be likely to read this chapter.

THOMAS CLARKSON was the father of the movement for the abolition of the slave trade, and, consequently, for the destruction of negro slavery itself, of which it is but an incident. The circumstances which turned his attention to it are novel. In 1785, he was a senior bachelor of arts of St. John's College, Cambridge. The vice-chancellor, impressed with the iniquity of the slave trade, announced to the seniors as a subject for a Latin dissertation the question : "Is it right to make slaves of others against their will?" He little thought of the far-reaching consequences of this proposal. Young Clarkson, having secured the Latin prize the previous year, was anxious to obtain it again. He went to London, and procured all the books relating to the subject he could find. His sensitive mind was shocked beyond measure at the horrors of "the middle passage" which they disclosed. Sleep often left his pillow while digesting the materials for his essay; and during its preparation he resolved to devote his life to the destruction of so appalling an evil. Noble resolution! Little did the young philanthropist then imagine that he should live, not only to see this trade abolished by Great Britain, and declared piracy by all Christian powers, but to witness the abolition of slavery itself in those islands of the West, around which his warm sympathies clustered; that he should see the humanity of the world roused in arms to put down the crime of making merchandise of the bodies and souls of mankind; and should himself, after a lapse of fifty-five years, preside, "the observed of all observers," in the metropolis of England, at a large Convention assembled from the four quarters of the globe, to devise means to achieve a final victory in this war against the foul system which upholds the principle that man can hold property in man. But I anticipate. Clarkson finished his essay, won the prize, and, true to his vow, commenced, friendless and without resources, the work

of abolition. He translated and enlarged his essay, and committing it to the press, started on a pilgrimage through the kingdom, in search of facts to illustrate the character of the traffic, and friends to aid him in its destruction. A singular instance of his patient zeal may be stated. He was anxious to ascertain whether slaves were *kidnapped* by the traders in the interior of Africa. He was told by a gentleman, that about a year before, he had conversed with a common sailor, who had made several excursions up the African rivers, in pursuit of slaves, and presumed he could inform him on this subject. He knew not the sailor's name, nor his residence, nor where he sailed from, and could only say, that when he saw him he was on board some man-of-war in ordinary. Clarkson started on the forlorn hope of finding this sailor. He successively visited Deptford, Woolwich, Chatham, Sheerness, Portsmouth, and Plymouth—boarding, during the tour, which occupied several weeks, 317 ships, and examining several thousand persons. I give the result in his own words: "At length I arrived at the place of my last hope (Plymouth). On my first day's expedition I boarded forty vessels, but found no one who had been on the coast of Africa in the slave trade. One or two had been there in King's ships, but they had never been on shore. Things were now drawing to a close; and my heart began to beat. I was restless and uneasy during the night. The next morning I felt agitated between the alternate pressure of hope and fear; and in this state I entered my boat. The fifty-seventh vessel I boarded was the Melampus frigate. One person belonging to it, on examining him in the captain's cabin, said he had been two voyages to Africa; and I had not long conversed with him before I found, to my inexpressible joy, that he was the man." This long-sought witness confirmed his suspicions in regard to kidnapping. In 1786, Clarkson published a tract, embodying a summary of the varied information he had obtained, and in June 1787 he organized, in London, the first committee for the abolition of the slave trade, and was appointed its secretary and agent. When visiting this

patriarch of humanity at Playford Hall in 1840, he showed me the records of this committee. There were the original entries in his own handwriting, made more than fifty-three years before ; and he was alive to read them to me, accompanied by many lively anecdotes of the early friends whose names and deeds were there recorded. In 1787 he had his first interview with Mr. Wilberforce, and found a ready access to the heart of that great and good man. In 1788 he published his important work, "The Impolicy of the Slave Trade." The next year he visited France, to enlist the friends of liberty in that country in favour of his scheme. He had interviews with Mirabeau, Neckar, and others. He was denounced as a spy, and was in imminent danger of being seized. Owing to the revolutionary storm then rising over the kingdom, he accomplished little by this tour, except to present copies of his printed works to the King, and obtain promises from Mirabeau and Neckar to call public attention to the subject when the agitations of the period had subsided. These promises were soon engulfed in the revolution which shook, not only France, but Europe, to its centre.

Previous to 1788, such progress had been made in public sentiment and feeling in England, through the indefatigable labours of Clarkson and the committee he had founded, that it was determined to bring the subject of Abolition before Parliament. Mr. Wilberforce was selected to open the question ; but owing to his ill health, Mr. Pitt, on the 9th of May 1788, moved that the House do resolve to take into consideration the state of the slave trade early in the next session. In 1790, Wilberforce introduced a proposition for the total abolition of the traffic, and sustained it with eminent ability, Pitt, Fox, and Burke giving him their support. The West India interest took fire, insisting that the trade was sanctioned by the Bible, and its abolition would ruin the commerce of London, Bristol, Liverpool, and other large marts. The session of 1792 saw the tables of both Houses loaded with influential petitions. Wilberforce led off, as usual, followed closely by Fox and Pitt. Dundas, "the

right hand of Pitt," opposed the measure, and was assailed by Fox in reply. In the Lords, the Duke of Clarence denounced Wilberforce as a "meddling fanatic," who ought to be expelled from Parliament. But the object of his censure lived to see his royal traducer, as King William IV., sign a bill appropriating £20,000,000 for the abolition of slavery in the West India islands! Omitting details, suffice it to say, that the friends of Abolition pressed its consideration upon the public attention from year to year, with increasing fervour, Clarkson being the out-door manager, and Wilberforce the Parliamentary leader (always sustained by Pitt and Fox), till, on the downfall of Pitt, and the coming in of a liberal administration, with Fox for its leader, in 1806, a condemnatory vote was obtained, which, in the next year, was followed by the total abolition of the trade.

I will not stop to state why this measure, since adopted from time to time by all Christian nations, has not fulfilled the expectations of its friends; nor why the number of victims of the slave trade in our day is double that of the time when Clarkson commenced his labours. In a word, so long as the existence of slavery makes a demand for fresh "cargoes of human agony," so long wretches will be found to brave all risks to furnish the supply. But the failure to attain complete success should not lessen our admiration of those early toils, which, like an oasis in the wide desert of human selfishness, refresh the eye of all who recognise the common brotherhood of man.

Mr. Clarkson was greatly aided in his labours by GRANVILLE SHARPE. This singular person had already become known for his advocacy of the rights of negro slaves when Clarkson commenced his work. He was born of humble parents, in 1735. He had a mind peculiarly fond of probing everything to the bottom. While an apprentice, a controversy with a Socinian led him to study Greek, that he might read the New Testament in the original. A dispute with a Jew induced him to obtain a knowledge of Hebrew. In 1767, his interference in behalf of a West India slave, whose master, then in London, had whipped him nearly to death, cost him

a lawsuit. He must be beaten, if the master could hold his slave in England. Eminent counsel told him he must fail, for the right of the master was not invalidated by bringing his slave to England. Repudiating this advice, Sharpe, with his usual diligence and bent of mind, devoted himself to the study of the law, preparatory to his own defence. The "law's delay" gave him ample time to explore the subject to its foundations. He published a tract "On the injustice and dangerous tendency of tolerating slavery, or even of admitting the least claim to property in the persons of men, in England." His rare authorities and profound reasoning converted to his views many leading members of the bar. After a delay of two years, the plaintiff abandoned the case, paying Sharpe heavy costs. While further prosecuting his legal researches, he had another affair of a similar kind, in which he was partially successful. By this time, though comparatively an obscure man, he was better read in the law of slavery, and the restrictions upon the system in England, than any barrister or jurist in Westminster Hall. In 1772 came on the hearing, before Lord Mansfield, in the matter of the negro Somersett, a West India slave, who claimed his freedom on the ground that his master had brought him into England. The ablest counsel were employed on both sides; the case was argued twice or thrice, and was under consideration several months. Sharpe took deep interest in the issue, frequently conferred with Somersett's counsel, and wrote in his behalf in the newspapers. At length, on the 22d of June 1772, Mansfield, with great reluctance (for he leaned to the side of the slaveholder), pronounced the celebrated judgment, that slavery, being contrary to natural law, was of so odious a nature that nothing but positive law could support it, and that every slave, on touching English soil, became free, and "therefore the man must be discharged!" This rule has ever since been recognised as law in England, and is so regarded now in all her wide-spread colonies, in every quarter of the globe. For three-fourths of a century, it has pursued slavery with uplifted weapon, ready to strike the manacles off its vic-

tims the moment they escaped beyond the boundaries of its odious and unnatural law; and in our day it stands like the flaming sword of Paradise, turning every way, to guard the tree of Liberty. For the early announcement of this noble and far-reaching principle, the world is indebted to the labours of Granville Sharpe, who commenced his career as a humble London apprentice. Having fought the good fight of Abolition along with Clarkson and Wilberforce, and gained distinction by his philanthropic deeds and writings, numbering Sir William Jones, Wilberforce, and other remarkable men, among his intimate friends, he died in 1813. A monument, with suitable devices and inscription, since erected to his memory in Westminster Abbey, marks the public sense of his high merits.

Mr. WILBERFORCE has not been over-estimated, but, in my judgment, he has been mis-estimated. Entitled to less relative praise for his abolition services than is generally bestowed, he is worthy of a higher position as a statesman and orator than is usually assigned to him. This common error is readily accounted for. The commanding place he so long occupied, as the Parliamentary leader in this reform, rendered him more conspicuous both at home and abroad, than any of his coadjutors, though no man was more ready than he to acknowledge that his services were meagre, compared with those of some of his less noted co-labourers. So, on the other hand, such is the lustre of Mr. Wilberforce's undoubted achievements in the Abolition cause, that to the public eye they have thrown into the shade his very superior talents in other and more general aspects. He would have stood in the front rank of Parliamentary orators (and those were the days of Burke, Fox, Pitt, Erskine, Wyndham, and Sheridan), had he never thrown a halo round his name by consecrating his powers to humanity. Thoroughly educated, and furnished with general information, his eloquence was of a high order—fervid, instructive, persuasive; his diction classical and elegant; his voice musical and bland; and though his figure was diminutive, and not graceful, his countenance was remarkably expressive. He possessed a

lively imagination, a keen sense of the ludicrous, a ready wit, and powers of sarcasm which Pitt might envy. These latter, however, he kept in subjection, mainly from his strong religious susceptibilities and kindly spirit, which impelled him to avoid giving pain, choosing to disarm personal assailants by winning appeals to their calmer judgments. On one occasion, after being repeatedly and coarsely alluded to, as "the honourable and very religious member," he turned upon his antagonist, and poured upon him a torrent of contempt, sarcasm, and rebuke, which astonished the House, not more for the ability it displayed, than that so great a master of indignant declamation should so rarely resort to its use. These intellectual elements combined with the spotless purity and winning beauty of his character, to give him great weight in the House, and contributed not a little to sustain the general policy of Mr. Pitt, whose supporter he usually was, though he ever maintained a position of comparative political independence. He had much personal influence over that minister, whose repeated offers to take office under his administration he steadily declined. He retired from Parliament in 1824. His last public appearance was in 1830, when, on the motion of his old friend Clarkson, he took the chair at a large meeting of delegates in London, assembled to promote the abolition of slavery in the West Indies.

Mr. Pitt's advocacy of Abolition is now believed to have been mainly sustained by his desire to retain his hold upon Wilberforce. During the twenty years which this question agitated Parliament and the country, Pitt, with the exception of two or three, reigned supreme, and never failed to carry any scheme he set his heart upon; but he left to Fox the honour of this noble victory.

We turn with more pleasure to contemplate for a moment the services of two very different coadjutors of Wilberforce and Clarkson—James Stephen and Zachary Macaulay. It has already been said, that the more imposing character of Mr. Wilberforce's services threw into the shade those of many not less worthy co-labourers. Of these, Stephen and the elder Macaulay were among the most eminent.

Mr. STEPHEN was a barrister. On being called to the bar, he emigrated to St. Kitts, and attained such distinction in the colonial courts, as to be called "the Erskine of the West Indies." Impaired health induced his return to England in 1794, where he made his way to a respectable standing in Westminster Hall. Soon after his return, he procured an introduction to Wilberforce, and immediately entered, with characteristic zeal, into the great work to which the former had devoted his powers. He was prepared for this, from the fact, that such was his abhorrence of slavery, he never owned a slave during his protracted residence in the West Indies. He subsequently married the sister of Mr. Wilberforce. He consecrated his vigorous pen to the cause of Abolition, and contributed much to create that public sentiment which demanded the abrogation of the traffic. At the solicitation of Mr. Perceval, he entered Parliament in 1808, where he remained seven or eight years. Always conscientious in the discharge of his political duties, he refused to support the administration which followed that of Perceval, in consequence of their neglect to promote a measure, which he had anxiously pressed upon them, for the registration of slaves in the West Indies. He soon after resigned his seat, and devoted himself more exclusively to the duties of a master in chancery, to which office he had been appointed in 1811, and which he held twenty years. He was the means of introducing several reforms in the practice of the Court of Chancery, though, by so doing, he essentially lessened his own emoluments. As an instance of his disinterestedness, it may be mentioned that he forbade his clerk to take the ordinary gratuities, and remunerated him out of his own pocket to the amount of about £800 a-year. What time he could spare from official duties, was devoted to efforts for the abolition of the slave trade by foreign states, and of slavery in the West Indies. Besides numerous pamphlets, occasional speeches, and an extensive correspondence on these subjects, he published an admirable legal work, entitled, "Slavery of the British West India Colonies Delineated," the plan of which has apparently been

followed by Judge Stroud, of Philadelphia, in a work of equal ability, on American Slavery. Mr. Stephen descended to his honoured grave in 1832, at the advanced age of 75.

Mr. MACAULAY is the father of the brilliant essayist and historian. And it is high praise to say that, as a writer, he is the worthy progenitor of such a descendant; for, though his publications fall short in beauty and splendour of those of his celebrated son, they are equal to his in logical acumen and argumentative power. Though younger in years than Stephen, Macaulay's services in the abolition of the slave trade were equal to his, while those in the cause of West India emancipation far transcended them.

The Life of Wilberforce, published by his sons in 1838, was thought to have done injustice to the early labours of Clarkson in the abolition of the slave trade. An unpleasant controversy at once arose as to the relative merits of these philanthropists, and especially in reference to their agency in promoting the abolition. An anecdote was told to me in London respecting the matter, which illustrates one of the idiosyncrasies in the mental constitution of another early and steadfast abolitionist—HENRY BROUGHAM—who, though young at the period of the abolition, had, while travelling on the continent, assisted Wilberforce by pursuing various inquiries in Holland, Germany, Poland, and other countries, in regard to the traffic. Some of the particulars of the story are forgotten, but enough are remembered for the present purpose. Soon after the appearance of the Life, the friends of Clarkson caused a book to be prepared, vindicating his services and claims, to which Brougham agreed to furnish an introduction. The body of the work was in press before the ex-chancellor, pressed with multifarious labours, had prepared his paper. The committee having the matter in charge waited upon him, and stated that the publication was delayed for want of his introduction; that country booksellers and anti-slavery societies were impatient to have their orders filled, &c. Brougham told them he had not written a line of it, but would have it completed by a given day of the same week. At the appointed time the commit-

tee called, and he read the paper. What was their mortification to find incorporated into the middle of it an attack on Daniel O'Connell, upon whose services they were then counting for aid in carrying through the Commons the bill pending for the abolition of the apprenticeship in the West Indies, and with whom they had had an interview on the subject that very morning. Here was a dilemma! They expostulated with Brougham; explained the ruinous consequences to the cause, of their sanctioning such an attack; and while they did not wish to interfere with the controversy between him and O'Connell, assured him that for them to issue such a publication at that crisis might seal the fate of the apprenticeship bill—nor could they send out the work without his introduction, without disappointing the public. After rather an exciting interview, Brougham dismissed them by peremptorily declaring, “they must take it as it was, or not at all.” They left in despair. The next day, one of the committee called, to see if something could not be done to get over the difficulty, when his lordship handed him the paper with the objectionable passage omitted.

CHAPTER VIII

Law Reform—Jeremy Bentham—His Opinion of the Common Law—His “Felicity” Principle—His Universal Code—His Works—The Fruits of his Labours—His Talents and Character.

THE father of Modern Law Reform was JEREMY BENTHAM. This singular person has been often sneered at by those who knew little of him or his writings, beyond what might be picked up from rival reviews. He was once the constant theme of ridicule to a large class of Englishmen, who only cared to know that he was said to be an eccentric old man, who shunned the world, pursued both his amusements and serious occupations in a way peculiar to himself, did not

believe in rotten boroughs or popular creeds, did believe in free trade in corn and money, thought the common law the perfection of absurdity, Lord Eldon's court a libel on equity, and wrote codes for the use of all the world possibly in the twenty-ninth century.

Mr. Bentham was one of the most remarkable men that has appeared in our age. He was born in 1747, and was descended from a race of attorneys. At the age of five, the family called him "the philosopher;" at eight he played well on the violin, on which he afterwards became a proficient; and at thirteen he went to Oxford, where he excited admiration and wonder by his acute observations, logical skill, and precision of language. When he took his degree, he was esteemed the first reasoner and philosophical critic in the university. He was at Oxford when Wesley and the "Methodists" were expelled, and his generous spirit was stirred with indignation against such tyranny. This induced him to examine the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church, the result of which he has left on record. At Oxford he attended the law lectures of Blackstone (being the substance of his Commentaries), and his clear mind detected the fallacies in his reasoning, and his honest spirit protested against many of his eulogiums on the Common Law of England.

The Bar, to which he was admitted in 1772, opened a brilliant prospect before him. His acute and precise method of drafting equity and law pleadings was much extolled, and his refusal to receive the usual fees excited no less attention. A sharp solicitor swelled a bill of costs in a case in which Bentham had succeeded—he protested, and was told that it was made up according to the rules, and he would lose caste if he altered it. Bentham was disgusted, resolved to quit the profession, and spend his life in "endeavouring," as he expressed it, "to put an end to the system, rather than profit by it." To the grasping pertinacity of this solicitor, the world is indebted for the sixty years' labour of Jeremy Bentham in the cause of law reform. Soon after this, he published his first work, "A

Fragment on Government; being an examination of what is delivered on that subject in Blackstone's Commentaries." He then visited Paris, where he became intimate with Brisson, through whose agency he was subsequently made a citizen of the French Republic, and elected a member of the second National Assembly.

His father died in 1792, leaving him a moderate fortune, which enabled him entirely to abandon his profession, and devote himself to the preparation of those works on law and government which have made his name celebrated in the four quarters of the globe. During the truce of Amiens, he again visited Paris, accompanied by Sir Samuel Romilly, where he found himself famous. M. Dumont was then publishing his works in French. Of his "*Traites de Legislation Civile et Penale*," in three vols., about 4,000 copies were sold in Paris. At this time there happened to be three vacancies in the French Institute, one of which was reserved for Bonaparte. Bentham was chosen to fill one of the vacancies. From affinity of tastes, no less than through the agency of Romilly, he soon after became intimate with the young men known as "the Edinburgh Reviewers"—Brougham, Jeffrey, Smith, Horner, Mackintosh, and their associates—and from that time was the Mentor of that galaxy of talent on the subject of Law Reform.

When Bentham was admitted to the bar, he found the English law, its principles and its practice, entrenched behind the interests of powerful classes, and rooted in the prejudices of all. Though called the perfection of reason, to his penetrating eye it was the offspring of a barbarous age, and, though a noble production for the times that gave it birth, it had obtruded into the light of a milder and more liberal civilization the harsh features which stamped its origin. To him it was the patchwork of fifteen centuries—a chaos of good and evil—an edifice exhibiting the architecture of the ancient Briton, the Gaul, the Goth, the Dane, the Saxon, and the Norman, all jumbled together, and to which, in order to render it tenable, modern hands had made numerous additions and improvements, till the whole

had become a huge, incoherent, and bewildering pile. He saw that it contained masses of material to aid in the erection of a new edifice, adapted to the enlarged wants and cultivated tastes of the present age; and he entered upon the elucidation of his plans for a judicial structure worthy of the nineteenth century. He was the first man who sat down to the task of exposing the defects of the English law. Heretofore, its students and ministers had been content to sift its principles from a chaotic mass of statutes and decisions, and collect and arrange the perplexing details of its forms of procedure. Commencing at the bottom, he worked up through all its ramifications, bringing everything to the test of expediency, and inquiring whether the various parts were homogenous, and whether the whole was suited to the wants of existing society, and the promotion of human well-being. Probably not intending, when he started, to do more than improve the system by amending it, he soon aimed at its complete reconstruction, branching out into an exhausting discussion of the principles on which all human laws should be based, nor stopping till he had surveyed the nature of government in its widest relations.

The test-principle of his system may be explained briefly thus: The only proper end of the social union is, the attainment of the maximum of the aggregate of happiness; and the attainment of this maximum of the aggregate of happiness is by the attainment of the maximum of individual happiness. The standard for determining whether a law is right or wrong, is its conduciveness to the maximum of the aggregate of happiness, by conducing to the maximum of individual happiness. This was known in his day, and in ours, as "the greatest-happiness principle," or "the principle of felicity"—which latter term he much preferred to that by which it is more commonly known, "the doctrine of utility." This was the keystone of Bentham's system. With this principle in his hand, he traversed the entire field of legislation, dividing it into two great parts—internal law, and international law. Internal law included the legislation which concerns a single state or community; international,

that which regulates the intercourse of different states with each other. His chief attention was devoted to preparing a code of internal law under the Greek name of *Pannomion* (the whole law). This he divided into four parts—the constitutional, the civil, the penal, and the administrative. The *constitutional* defined the supreme authority, and the mode of executing its will. The *civil* defined the rights of persons and of property, and was termed the “right-conferring code.” The *penal* defined offences and their punishments, and was termed “the wrong-repressing code.” The *administrative* defined the mode of executing the whole body of the laws, and was termed “the code of procedure.” Some of these codes he run out into details; others he left unfinished. They all bore the stamp of great research, learning, and symmetry, and were supported by vigorous reasoning, and elucidated by a comprehensive genius. Many a *codifier* of our day has been indebted, directly or indirectly, to these labours of Jeremy Bentham, to an extent of which he was perhaps not aware.

His system struck at the very root of the English law. Of course, such a “wild enthusiast,” such a “reckless innovator,” was laughed at, misrepresented, and abused. Not a single tile or crumbling pillar of “the perfection of reason” must be touched. The rubbish that blocked up the avenues leading to it, the dust which choked its passages, must not be removed. Venerable for its age, hallowed as the legacy of our ancestors, the work of wise men and dead men, it must be worshipped at a distance, and let alone; and the timid of all classes denounced such as would disturb its consecrated dust. If Bentham had done nothing more than dispel this delusion, he would deserve the thanks of the millions in both hemispheres who submit to the sway of the common law; and this he did most effectually.

Bentham brought to his work reasoning faculties which did not so much probe subjects to the bottom, as begin there, and work upwards to their surface—a patience which no amount of drudgery could weary—a taste whose light reading was Bacon and Beccaria—a memory retentive as

tablets of brass—a boldness which shrunk from looking no institution in the face, and questioning its pretensions to utility and its claims to homage—an honesty which never averted the eye from conclusions legitimately born of sound premisses—a conscience which followed truth wherever it led. Lord Brougham, who knew him intimately, has happily said : “In him were blended, to a degree perhaps unequalled in any other philosopher, the love and appreciation of general principles, with the avidity for minute details ; the power of embracing and following out general views, with the capacity for pursuing each one of numberless particular facts.” He was an adept in many modern languages, as French, Italian, Spanish, and German, and he extended his linguistic knowledge into the Swedish, Russian, and other northern tongues. These acquisitions facilitated his study of the history of all countries and times, with whose philosophy, legislation, and jurisprudence, he was acquainted beyond most men.

His numerous writings all bore some relation to his “Felicity” principle, and the topics discussed were almost as multifarious as human exigency and action. Including his larger pamphlets, they number nearly fifty volumes. These chiefly relate to government, law, and jurisprudence ; but he also wrote extensively on morals, politics, and ecclesiastical establishments. Nor did science wholly escape his searching pen, for he treated of chemistry and anatomy. He assailed Blackstone’s Commentaries, and attacked Burke’s plan for economical reform. He wrote on prison discipline and penal colonies, and illustrated the anti-Christian tendency of oaths. He advocated free schools, and denounced church establishments. He attacked rotten boroughs, and drafted plans for work-houses. He vindicated free trade, and showed the impolicy of the usury laws. He prepared a constitutional code to be used by any state, and drew up a reform bill for the House of Commons. He wrote separate volumes or pamphlets on bankruptcy, poor laws, primogeniture, escheats, taxation, jails, Scotch reform, the French judiciary, the criminal code of Spain, juries, evidence, rewards and punishments, oaths, Parlia-

mentary law, corporation reform, the universities, education, &c. He wrote for, or offered codes to, France, Spain, Greece, Russia, and the South American States—sent a letter to each Governor of the United States, proposing to prepare for them an entire code of laws—was intimate personally, or by correspondence, with Howard, Lafayette, Wilberforce, the Emperor Alexander, Napoleon, Brissot, Mirabeau, Neckar, Benezet, Franklin, Jefferson, Bolivar, Jean Baptiste Say, Toussaint L’Ouverture, Dr. Bowering, and in fact with most of the men of his times, who were celebrated in any part of the world for their services in the cause of progress, liberty, humanity, and reform.

No man, unless endowed with all the wisdom of the ancients and the moderns, could write so much on such a variety of subjects, without committing grave errors. Yet he wrote no page which does not contain some profound thoughts, whilst many of his volumes are replete with wisdom; and if any one mortal man could have written codes for all the nations on earth, that man was Jeremy Bentham.

His defects were partly the result of his peculiar mind, and partly of those idiosyncrasies which germinate in the minds of all speculators who mingle little with men. Bold and original to a fault, he was too ready to suspect that an old thing was necessarily a bad thing. His exhaustless patience, and fondness for abstractions and theorizing, which grew by what they fed on, led him to carry everything out to its ultimate principles, till he sometimes trenched on absurdity or sunk into obscurity. He mixed so little with the world, and had such limited experience in the every-day business of life, that he often forgot that his codes must be executed by and upon mortal men. He lived fifty years in the house immortalized as the dwelling-place of Milton, in the very heart of London; and yet nine-tenths of the inhabitants, about whom he was thinking, and writing, and printing for half a century, never knew that he lived at all. Habits induced by this recluse life were not improved by his being the head and oracle of a school, whose immoderate praises, which ho

must hear, were not counterbalanced by denunciations from without, to which he never listened. He tried to reduce everything to a system, and wrote as if the human mind were some curious little wheel, to be put into a vast engine which, when regulated according to his system, would run without jarring or friction. He made too little allowance for the individualities and eccentricities of mankind. But in this he did not differ from many other philosophers—men wiser and better than their generation—to whom their successors have learned to do justice.

Then, he undertook so much that he left a great deal incomplete; so that, in many of his works, while he has finished one side of a subject, he seems not to have touched or seen the other side. His style, especially in his latter years, was rough, involved, uncongenial; often obscure from its verbosity; and, when clear, fatiguing the reader by so exhausting the subject as to leave nothing for him to do but read. He called his style of reasoning “the *exhaustive mode*,” and he crowded it full of crabbed words of his own invention. He wrote many of his works in French, and they were given to the world by Dumont, a Genevan. Hazlitt has wittily said, “His works have been translated into French; they ought to be translated into English.” Sydney Smith, when reviewing his “Book of Fallacies,” remarks, in his quaint way, “Whether it is necessary there should be a middleman between the cultivator and the possessor, learned economists have doubted; but neither gods, men, nor booksellers can doubt the necessity of a middleman between Mr. Bentham and the public. . . . The mass of readers will choose to become acquainted with him through the medium of Reviews, after that eminent philosopher has been washed, trimmed, shaved, and forced into clean linen.”

Bentham invented the words *Codify* and *Codification*, now in such general use. But let it not be supposed that he was guilty of the absurdity which has sometimes been ascribed to him, of imagining that the entire laws of a commonwealth could be compressed into a single volume;

nor of that other absurdity, that the laws can be written so plain that the meanest capacity can understand them fully, and apply them, without mistake, to all the varieties of human rights and wrongs, and the ever-shifting vagaries and exigencies of society. He was too wise and experienced to imagine that what could not be true in regard to any other science or species of writing, must be true in regard to jurisprudence and legislation.

Bentham laboured without apparent success at home for years. He was famous in France, and appreciated even in Russia, before he was known in England. At length his reiterated blows made an impression. He won converts in high places, and they became his "middlemen" with the public. Brougham and Smith spread out his great ideas in attractive colours on the pages of the "*Edinburgh Review*," and they sparkled in brilliant speeches from Romilly and Mackintosh in Parliament. One after another, the champions for the inviolability of the ancient system were prostrated, till reasonable men admitted that, whether or not Jeremy Bentham was right, the common law was certainly wrong, and must be materially altered. Though he took no part in actual legislation, his was the master mind that set others in motion; his genius was the secret spring that moved the vast reformatory machine. He did not live to see his whole system adopted (and would not, had he lived till the millennium), but he saw parts of it incorporated into the jurisprudence of his country, whilst other parts were postponed rather than rejected. He saw the fruits of his labours in the amelioration of a sanguinary criminal code, and the abridgment of the penalty of death—in the improvement of the poor laws and penitentiaries, and the kindlier treatment of prisoners—in the softening of the harsher features of imprisonment for debt, of the bankrupt laws, and the general law of debtor and creditor—in lopping off some excrescences in chancery, and cutting down costs and simplifying the modes of procedure in other courts—in the abolition of tests, and the emancipation of the Catholics—in the greater freedom of trade, the en-

largement of the suffrage, and the partial equalization of representation in Parliament—in the appointment of commissioners to revise the whole mass of statute law, and reduce it to a uniform code—and, more than all, in the conviction, penetrating a multitude of intelligent minds, that a largo portion of the English law, as administered, so far from being the perfection of reason, was a disgrace to the human understanding, and the homage paid to it a blind idolatry.

Nor did he see these fruits in England alone. As he laboured for the world, so he saw the products of his toil in both hemispheres. France and Russia published his writings, and they were extensively read in Germany and Switzerland. His works were circulated at Calcutta and the Cape of Good Hope; at New York and New South Wales; in the Canadas, and the Republics of South America. America profited largely by his suggestions in the simplification of its laws, and their revision and codification in many of its states—in the comparative humanity of its criminal codes and prison discipline—and especially in the recent sweeping reforms in the practice of its courts in several of the principal states, and the abolition of the monopoly of the legal profession—a monopoly worthless to those whom it protected, and galling to those whom it excluded. I do not say, that to him we are solely indebted for these reforms. But his hand planted the tree whose fruit is now being gathered. His chief glory is the emancipation of the mind from a blind idolatry of the English common law; and for this he deserves unmeasured praise.

Mr. Bentham was kind, cheerful, simple-hearted, witty, and greatly beloved by his friends. Frank, even to bluntness, he refused a costly present from the Emperor of Russia, lest he should be tempted to praise when he ought to blame. A great husbander of moments, he took air and exercise while entertaining ordinary visitors; and when conversing on his favourite themes with such as Romilly and Brougham, he kept his secretaries busy in noting down their remarks. The ridicule and abuse of which he was the subject rarely reached its aim, for he avoided personal contro-

versies—discussing principles, and not men. He died in 1832, in the eighty-fifth year of his age ; and gave a singular evidence of his attachment to his principles, by bequeathing his body to the anatomist's knife, for the advancement of medical science.

CHAPTER IX.

Law Reform—The Penal Code of England—Its Barbarity—The Death-Penalty
—Sir Samuel Romilly—His Efforts to Abolish Capital Punishment—His Talents and Character.

THE earliest exponent of Jeremy Bentham in Parliament, and his interpreter with the public, was Sir SAMUEL ROMILLY. This accomplished lawyer, from the period he entered Parliament, in 1806, till his death, in 1818, directed his main efforts to Law Reform ; especially the amelioration of the Penal Code, and the diminution of the number of capital offences.

The criminal code of England, when Romilly commenced his labours, was a disgrace to civilization. Blackstone had said in his Commentaries (and it was substantially true in 1806) : “Among the variety of actions which men are liable daily to commit, no less than one hundred and sixty are declared by act of Parliament to be felonies, without benefit of clergy ; or, in other words, to be worthy of instant death.” I will specify a few items once in this bloody catalogue. Treason, murder, arson, and rape, were of course capital crimes. So was counterfeiting coin ; refusing to take the oath of allegiance under various circumstances ; falsifying judicial records ; taking a reward for restoring stolen goods, when accessory with the thief ; obstructing the service of legal process ; hunting in the night disguised ; writing threatening letters to extort money ; pulling down turnpike gates ; assembling to produce riots, and not dispersing at the order of a magistrate ; transporting wool or sheep twice

out of the kingdom ; smuggling ; fraudulent bankruptcies ; marrying a couple except in “a church,” without the license of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and making false entries in relation thereto in a marriage register ; wandering as gipsies thirty days ; burglary, in the night ; stealing, from the person, property above the value of twelve pence, or, from a dwelling-house, above five shillings, or a vessel above forty shillings ; stealing fish, hares, and conies ; robbing on the highway to the value of a farthing ; forgery in all its multiplied forms ; sundry mere trespasses to personal property, such as tearing down fences, opening fish-ponds, destroying trees in parks and gardens, maiming cattle. The list might be swelled through a chapter.

Down to the reign of William III., counsel were not allowed to prisoners, even in cases of high treason, when the whole power of the Government was brought to crush them ; and it was not till the recent reign of William IV., that, in other capital cases, counsel for the accused were legally allowed to do more than state points of law to the court.

Such a Penal Code would correspond with the character of the Feejee Islands. Yet it was, in its main features, the law of England in 1806 ; and, notwithstanding the lucubrations of Bentham, the essays of Brougham, and the speeches of Romilly and Mackintosh, sustained by the protests and the petitions of churchmen and dissenters, it remained the law, with slight modifications, till the reign of George IV. And this code could be eulogized by the classical Blackstone ; whilst Paley, the archdeacon, could congratulate the readers of his Moral Philosophy on the fact, that torture to extort confessions had been excluded “from the mild and cautious system of penal jurisprudence established in this country !”

No one will suppose that such laws, the offspring of the dark ages, could be enforced against all offenders in the nineteenth century. Still, capital convictions under them were frightfully numerous. The statistics of English criminal jurisprudence afford abundant illustrations of the

doctrines, that the severity of the law does not diminish crime, and that the certainty, rather than the severity of punishment, is the surest preventive. These doctrines had been maintained with great power by Lord Bacon, by Stiernhook, the Swedish Blackstone, by Blackstone himself, by the Marquis of Beccaria, by Voltaire, by Montesquieu, and Bentham; and even Paley had admitted their truth. Romilly enforced them in Parliament; and it may be safely affirmed, that the history of crime proves nothing if it does not establish their truth. Larcenies, burglaries, robberies, and forgeries, had increased in England during the eighteenth century, much beyond the advance of population and commerce, notwithstanding the severity of the law and its frequent execution. But these obvious facts were assigned to other causes than defects in the penal code, and mild doctrines were scouted as the dogmas of visionary enthusiasts, by nearly the whole of the bench, the bar, and the leading men in Church and State, at the dawn of the present century. They admitted that the unvarying execution of the law would be barbarous; but insisted that its frightful penalties ought to be suspended over the heads of offenders, to deter from crime; whilst they trusted to indirect modes of softening its rigours. So, judges undertook to bend the law to suit the merits of particular cases; and the humanity of juries, outrunning the injunctions of their oaths, opened the door of escape in cases of peculiar severity. The latter would frequently find that the value of the property stolen did not reach the capital point; as, that a shilling piece was worth but eleven pence farthing; or a crown, but four shillings and sixpence; or goods for which the thief had asked £8, and refused £6, were worth but thirty-nine shillings; thus stultifying their senses to save a life which the law clamoured to sacrifice.

Another evil resulting from the severity of the English code was, that merciful judges, during the trial of offenders for minor crimes punishable with death, would lend a ready ear to the ingenious cavils and quirks of counsel, and quash the indictment, or refine away the plain words of a statute,

so as to exclude the offence from its operation, to save the life of a fellow-creature whose crime deserved a ten days' commitment to the house of correction. We are now reaping the fruits; for this has helped to give a new impetus to the operation of that system by which the practical relations of law and justice are often so entirely severed. And not only so, but all these cavils, refinings, and quibbles, are recorded in books, and have come down to us as authoritative parts of "the perfection of human reason," making convenient holes for sturdy rogues, with the help of sharp-witted lawyers, to creep through the meshes of a now comparatively mild criminal code.

Sir SAMUEL ROMILLY found the penal law of England thus sanguinary on the statute-book; thus abused in its administration by the courts; thus entrenched behind the authority of judges, lawyers, statesmen, and divines, when he commenced the humane but apparently hopeless task of adapting its penalties to the civilization of the age. He brought to this work professional eminence, talents of a rare order, learning varied and accurate, eloquence captivating and powerful, and a zeal and courage surpassed only by the benevolent warmth of his heart. Having previously secured some reforms in the civil law, he carried a bill, in 1808, repealing the capital part of the act against stealing property of above twelve-pence value. This cruel law had existed more than a thousand years, and probably in a thousand cases in which it had been executed the hangman's rope cost more than the stolen property for which a life was forfeited. Even then Romilly could induce the Legislature to fix the death-limit no higher than £15. This and another repealing act had slipped through Parliament in a very quiet way, without exciting the attention of the country. In 1807, Romilly proposed two bills, repealing the laws making it capital to steal to the value of above five shillings from a shop, or forty from a dwelling-house. He sustained them by a speech, which exhibited great research into the statistics of crime, comprehensive views of the philosophy of rewards and punishments, lofty appeals to humanity, and

a just appreciation of the benevolent and liberal tendencies of the times. Both bills failed. But the friends of the halter had become alarmed at these reiterated attempts to restrict the death-penalty. It was the first time the mask had been torn from the penal code of England, and its visage, grim and bloody, exposed to the public eye. The excitement caused by this attempt to narrow the scaffold is at this day incredible. The chancellor, the bishop, the barrister, the attorney, the reviewer, and the obscure pamphleteer—all entered the lists to crush the disciple of Jeremy Bentham, and demolish his dangerous heresies. If Romilly had attacked the monarchy or the church itself, he could hardly have produced more indignation. If Jack Ketch was no longer to hang men for stealing a cast-off coat worth five shillings and sixpence, what would become of England! Sir Samuel published a pamphlet containing the substance of his great speech, with additional statistics, which Brougham made the basis of an able essay in the “Edinburgh Review.” The pamphlet and the essay produced a profound impression upon liberal and humane minds throughout the country.

For two years Romilly was able to accomplish nothing in Parliament. In 1811, he took advantage of some favouring circumstances to carry a law abolishing capital punishment in the cases of soldiers and sailors found begging, without having testimonials of their discharge from the service. Through the seven following years, though Romilly and his coadjutors brought all their influence to bear in the Commons, in the pages of the “Edinburgh Review,” and by pamphlets published to the country, charged with appalling facts, unanswerable arguments, and glowing appeals to the heart of the nation, they fell on the iron-mail of the Tory party only to rebound in their own faces; and this great man having bequeathed the prosecution of the work to Mackintosh, sunk into his grave in 1818.

But, not alone to reforms in the criminal code did Romilly give his hand. He assailed the Court of Chancery, and exposed some of the abuses which festered under the

stagnant administration of Eldon, exposed the huge accumulations of rubbish which so blocked up the common law courts, that the difficulty of suitors to get in was only surpassed by the impossibility of their getting out; and though the reforms which he proposed were very moderate, and aimed only at glaring defects, they encountered the same bigoted attachment to ancient abuses which assailed him in the other field of his exertions. Lord Eldon especially construed every insinuation that the system of Equity was not perfect, into a personal attack on its head.

As Solicitor-General, Romilly had the honour of bringing in the bill for the abolition of the slave trade, in 1806-7; and in 1814, when the European treaty of peace, negotiated by Castlereagh on the part of England, and which provided for the revival of the traffic by France, came before Parliament, he led the friends of humanity to the attack upon that article of it in a speech of the loftiest rebuke, breathing the purest philanthropy and adorned with the richest eloquence. His eulogium on Wilberforce and Clarkson was beautiful, and his appeal to the former, as he turned and addressed him personally, thrilling.

Romilly's mind was cast in a rare mould, and his heart was susceptible of the liveliest emotions. He could master the understanding with his reason, and sway the will by his persuasion. He frowned down meanness with the dignity of a judge sentencing a culprit, and his sarcasm was too keen to be often provoked. Standing at the head of the Equity bar, his professional attainments covered the widest field, and were only equalled by the extensive practice to which they were applied. His character was beautifully pure, and he was the delight, almost the idol, of his intimate friends. Yet his modesty always held him back from assuming in the courts and the House of Commons the place that was assigned to him by the universal homage of his party, and the all but unanimous verdict of his opponents.

Romilly was the grandson of a French mechanic, who, with his wife, fled to England on the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. His father married the daughter of a refugee, and

Samuel was, therefore, of unmixed French blood. He was born in 1757. His father, who was a watchmaker, articled him to a commercial house, the death of whose head soon threw him back into his father's shop, where he kept the books for two or three years. During this time, he marked out for himself, and pursued with avidity and success, a course of classical study. Leaving the shop, he entered as an apprentice the office of one of the clerks in Chancery, and for several years devoted all the leisure hours he could snatch from the drudgery of business, to the cultivation of general literature. Arriving at his majority, he studied law, and was called to the bar at the age of twenty-five—an admirable specimen of "a self-made man." The following account shows how his sensitive mind was, in mere childhood bent toward the work which engrossed his mature years. He says : "A dreadful impression was made on me by relations of murders and acts of cruelty. The prints which I found in the Lives of the Martyrs, and the Newgate Calendar, have cost me many sleepless nights. My dreams, too, were disturbed by the hideous images which haunted my imagination by day. I thought myself present at executions, murders, and scenes of blood; and I have often lain in bed, agitated by my terrors, equally afraid of remaining awake in the dark, and of falling asleep to encounter the horrors of my dreams. Often have I, in my evening prayers to God, besought him, with the utmost fervour, to suffer me to pass the night undisturbed by horrid dreams." It may be that these childish terrors had something to do with his painfully tragic end. The death of a wife to whom he was fondly attached, and over whose bed he had watched with agonizing solicitude, threw him into a paroxysm of insanity, and in an hour of mental aberration he terminated a life which England could not afford to lose. He had been proud to acknowledge himself the disciple, in law reform, of Jeremy Bentham, and the friendship between him and Henry Brougham was as strong as the cords of a brotherly affection.

CHAPTER X.

Law Reform—The Penal Code—Restriction of the Penalty of Death in 1823-4
—Appointment of Commissioners to Reform the Civil Law in 1828-9—Sir James Mackintosh—Brougham—Robert Hall.

THE leadership in reforming the criminal code devolved on Sir JAMES MACKINTOSH on the death of Romilly. At the election just before his decease, the liberal party largely increased its representatives in Parliament. Early in the session of 1819, Sir James carried a motion against Ministers for a committee to revise the penal code. He was appointed its chairman, and in 1820-1, in pursuance of its objects, he introduced six bills for the abrogation of capital punishment in certain cases of forgery, larceny, and robbery, and amending the law in other important particulars. The bills were defeated. A partial effort at reform was made the next session, and one or two feeble triumphs achieved. But the day was dawning. In 1823, Sir James proposed nine resolutions, providing for thorough reforms in the penal code. Mr. Peel, the Home Secretary, caused these propositions to be rejected, only that Ministers might introduce bills of their own, which largely restricted the death penalty, and prepared the way for other repealing acts, till capital punishment was abrogated in some fifty cases. Thus the dark and sanguinary system, which had so long disgraced the jurisprudence of England, received an effective blow.

In 1828, Mr. Brougham made his celebrated speech in favour of remodelling the whole civil branch of the common law. Near the close he said—“It was the boast of Augustus—it formed part of the glare in which the perfidies of his earlier years were lost—that he found Rome of brick, and left it of marble—a praise not unworthy a great prince; but how much nobler shall be the sovereign’s boast when he shall have it to say that he found law dear, and left it cheap; found it a sealed book, left it a living letter; found it the

patrimony of the rich, left it the inheritance of the poor; found it the two-edged sword of craft and oppression, left it the staff of honesty and the shield of innocence!" This speech, one of the noblest Mr. Brougham ever delivered, was followed by an address to the Throne for the appointment of commissioners to inquire into the origin, progress, and termination of actions in the courts, and into the state of the law regarding real property. Two commissions were immediately instituted, one of general common law inquiry, the other of inquiry into the law of real estate. Afterwards, the subjects of codification, consolidation of the statutes, and reform of the criminal law, were referred to other commissions. The commission to inquire into abuses in courts of equity had previously been appointed. Some twenty or thirty of the ablest lawyers in the kingdom were placed on these commissions, several of whom have since been elevated to the Bench. Their elaborate reports, presented during the past twenty years, have displayed vast research and learning, and the numerous reforms recommended by them, exhibiting a cautious but steady advance in the path of improvement, have generally been adopted by the legislature. Though the law of England still includes a chaos of absurdities, the reforms introduced by these commissioners will be appreciated by all who have occasion to explore the intricate windings of the huge structure. The reports alluded to have been the text-books of revisers and codifiers in other countries where the common law prevails, and were frequently cited, and their recommendations often adopted, by the able revisers of the New York Statutes—which last have served as the model for similar changes in other states of the American Union.

I am now to speak more particularly of Sir James Macintosh, one of the brightest ornaments of the liberal party of Great Britain. This eminent Scotsman was born of humble parentage, in 1765. At the University of Aberdeen he met Robert Hall, the celebrated Baptist divine, to whom he became warmly attached, "because," as Sir James says, "I could not help it." He adds, that he "was fascinated

by his brilliancy and acumen, in love with his cordiality and ardour, and awe-struck by the transparency of his conduct, and the purity of his principles." Their class-mates called them Plato and Herodotus. They travelled the whole field of ancient and modern metaphysics and philosophy hand in hand, debating every point as they went, till in Plato and Edwards, in Aristotle and Berkley, in Cicero and Butler, in Socrates and Bacon, there was scarcely a principle they had not examined, and about which they had not enjoyed a keen encounter of wits. The heat engendered by these friendly controversies fused more completely into one their congenial natures. Such an attachment, formed in the spring-time of youth, was sure to endure; and though, in subsequent life, they moved in widely different spheres, their intimacy continued unbroken.

Being destined for the medical profession, Mackintosh took his degree at Edinburgh, and went up to London to practise. George III. then exhibiting symptoms of insanity, the subject of his illness, and the proposal of making his son Regent, were agitating Parliament when Mackintosh arrived in the metropolis. Doctor Mackintosh, instead of prescribing for the diseases of the king, wrote a pamphlet in favour of the claims of the prince—leaving the constitution of the monarch to take care of itself, while he attended to the constitution of the monarchy. The king suddenly recovered, when, it being no longer necessary to administer medicine either to the Crown or the Constitution, Mackintosh went to Leyden to complete his studies, where he lounged away a few months, reading Homer and Herodotus, to the great neglect of Galen and Hippocrates. Returning to England, he plunged into matrimony before he had sufficient practice to buy an anatomical skeleton for his office. Happily, his wife sympathized in his literary tastes, and at once detecting the defects of his character, "urged him to overcome his almost constitutional indolence."

The French Revolution, which ruined so many fortunes, made his. In 1791, he published a volume entitled "*Vindiciae Gallicæ*, or, a Defence of the French Revolution and

its English admirers against the accusations of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke." The very title-page immediately carried off the first edition, and the acute reasoning, brilliant declamation, and classic style of this vigorous but imprudent production gave currency to three editions at the end of four months. There was a great deal of *heady* strength in both these essays. Mackintosh's was like a river sweeping to the ocean, covered with sparkling foam; Burke's like the long, heavy swells of that ocean, whose crests are pelted by the winds and dance in the sun. Both authors set up for prophets; and, like other less famous seers, they mistook the illusions of their fancy and the suggestions of their imagination for revelations. Burke was nearer right as to the result of the then pending revolution; but Europe would now account Mackintosh the best prophet. This volume gave Mackintosh an introduction to Fox and the other Whig chiefs, and he became their warm friend. Soon after, falling into the captivating society of Burke, his teachings combined with the sanguinary turn of French affairs to considerably modify the views put forth in his *Vindiciae*.

Abandoning medicine, Mackintosh entered Lincoln's Inn as a student of law, and was called to the bar in 1795. But though the study of the law was more congenial to his tastes than medicine, his practice in his new profession was scarcely more extensive than in the old. In truth, he was too indolent, too desultory in his efforts, too fond of literature and abstract speculation, to excel in any pursuit requiring close application and orderly habits; and this grave defect rendered his whole life a series of brilliant but incompleted performances. In 1798, he proposed to deliver a series of lectures in Lincoln's Inn, on the Law of Nature and of Nations. The doors were closed against him, because of his supposed Jacobinical principles, the Benchers of that conservative corporation not wishing to have the doctrines of the *Vindiciae Gallicæ* promulgated in their halls. Mackintosh published his introductory lecture to refute the charge of Jacobinism, and it was so tinctured

with Burkeism, and so philosophical and eloquent, that it captivated Pitt, who persuaded the Chancellor to recommend the opening of the Inn. It was done, and Mackintosh entranced a learned audience throughout his gorgeous course.

His next attractive performance was the defence of Peltier, a French refugee, the editor of the *Ambigu*, for an alleged libel on Napoleon, the First Consul. His oration (for it partook little of the character of a speech at the bar) in vindication of the liberty of the press was pronounced by Lord Ellenborough, the chief justice, to be the most eloquent address ever delivered in Westminster Hall. Madame de Staël sent it through Europe in a French translation, it secured for its author a continental reputation, and in our day it is read by thousands who have hardly heard of any other production of his tongue or pen. His lectures and his oration not only gave him celebrity, but, what he needed quite as much, a little money ; and they brought him an offer of a judicial station at Bombay. Still pressed by pecuniary embarrassments, after much reluctance, he consented to be banished, with his wife and children, from his native land, to a foreign clime, amongst a strange people. For nearly eight years he discharged his judicial duties with fidelity, but through every month of those years he sighed for his country and its healthy breezes, his old associates and their brilliant society. He relieved the tedium of his expatriation by making some researches into Oriental institutions, by founding a literary club at Bombay, and by indulging, in his desultory way, in classical and philosophical pursuits. He was not inattentive, however, to the duties of his responsible office, and his study and administration of the criminal laws of India turned his attention to the subject which occupied so large a share of his subsequent Parliamentary life—the penal code of England.

The generous and philanthropic mind which had prompted the extension of the right hand of fellowship to the emancipated masses of France in 1791, and which, forty years later, was stretched forth to break the chains of the West India

bondmen, was not slow to see that the criminal code of his own country was the offspring of a rude and sanguinary age. Returning to England in 1811, he entered Parliament in 1813, where he remained until his death, in 1832. He promptly took his seat by the side of his friends, Brougham and Romilly, and threw his great soul into the contest of the people for reform. The important questions growing out of the European and American wars, in regard to the rights of neutrals, were then pending, and he joined Brougham in advocating liberal measures. And, to the end of his legislative career, on all questions of foreign policy and continental combinations, on the Alien Bill and the liberty of the press, Catholic emancipation, the abolition of slavery, the recognition of South American independence, and the settlement of Greece, the education of the people, the freedom of trade, the relief of the Dissenters, and Parliamentary reform, he was ever found on the side of justice and humanity. For a short period he was the leader of the liberal party in the Commons, but he soon relinquished the post to the more daring and robust Brougham. Indeed, Sir James had not the capacity for leading a popular body like the House of Commons. He was too indolent in mastering dry details, too little of a business man, and his style of oratory was too philosophical, classical, and refined, to produce the best effect on such an assembly. He spoke over the heads of country squires and men of the 'Change, who could not translate his Greek and Latin quotations, nor catch the point of his learned allusions, nor see precisely what these had to do with the traffic in corn or negroes, or the overthrow of the Holy Alliance abroad, or the uprooting of rotten boroughs at home. When Hume figured before the House, with his files of statistics, these plain men could arrive at the sum total of what he sought. When Canning's shafts of wit were brought to bear on the Opposition, they could see why his antagonists winced. When Romilly's eloquence reached them, they were refreshed and delighted. And when Brougham shook the walls like an earthquake,

they understood why they were so moved. But Mackintosh's Plato and Priam, his Homer and his Helicon, were "Greek" to them. His speeches were better adapted to be read in the library of the scholar than to be heard in the Commons House of Parliament. It was these peculiarities in his oratory, his utter want of all taste for business, and his indolent and immethodical habits, which kept him behind men of inferior talents and acquirements while his party was in opposition, and gave him no prominent place in its councils when it assumed the reins of Government. Sydney Smith, in a characteristic letter to Sir James's son, writes thus: "Curran, the Master of the Rolls, said to Grattan, 'You would be the greatest man of your age, Grattan, if you would buy a few yards of red tape, and tie up your bills and papers.' This was the fault or misfortune of your excellent father. He never knew the use of red tape, and was utterly unfit for the common business of life."

Mackintosh was a man of the purest benevolence and the liveliest philanthropy. He held all his vast literary and philosophical attainments cheap in comparison with his labours in the cause of humanity. The friendless criminal, shuddering in the dock under the frown of some heartless judge—the slave, writhing under the lash of a task-master in the islands of the West—the yeoman or burgher, deprived of his just electoral rights—the educated Dissenter and Roman Catholic, shut out from stations of honour and trust for refusing a test which stained their consciences, were all advanced to a higher civilization and a broader field of civil and religious freedom, by his aid. He was the zealous co-worker of Wilberforce, Clarkson, Brougham, Buxton, Sturge, and Lushington, in the work of negro emancipation. His last, greatest speech in Parliament was on the Reform Bill. Bulwer says of it: "I shall never forget the extensive range of ideas, the energetic grasp of thought, the sublime and soaring strain of legislative philosophy, with which he charmed and transported me."

I have spoken of his intimacy with ROBERT HALL. There

was a striking similarity in the structure of their minds and in their literary tastes. The politician was a classical, philosophical lawyer and Parliamentarian. The divine was a classical, philosophical theologian and preacher. Each was fond of abstract speculation—each was a profound and original reasoner and thinker—each revelled in the literature of the ancients—each was a writer of whom any nation or age might be proud. Hall much excelled his friend in the high walks of oratory, and the power of transfixing an auditory, and holding them spell-bound while he played with their passions and emotions with masterly skill. The first pulpit orator of his day, in the zenith of his fame he could attract a greater crowd of rare men than any other preacher in the metropolis or the country. The same cannot be affirmed of Mackintosh in the theatre where he displayed his forensic powers. The speech which so transported Bulwer in the House of Commons, from defects in the delivery, dismissed half the members. Each shone no less in the social circle than in the forum. While Mackintosh was the more ornate and classical talker, Hall surpassed him equally in keen sarcasm and solid argument. The conversational talents of Hall were more appreciable by ordinary capacities, his style being racy, off-hand, bold. Mackintosh was fitted to be the companion of polite scholars and learned critics, and his conversation was more showy, dazzling, and prepared. The wit of Hall, when in full play, approached to drollery, and his sarcasm cut to the bone. Hall made no effort to shine in society, and all his good things seemed to bubble up naturally from a full fountain, whilst his strength was reserved for public exhibitions, where he shone in splendour. Mackintosh elaborated his social effusions (and it was his weakness); his best things gushed like *jet d'eau*s from prepared reservoirs; and if he failed to win applause at St. Stephen's, he was sure to be the centre of attraction at Holland House. Hall was loved by his friends. Mackintosh was admired by his associates. Each was a philanthropist and reformer, and each in his sphere was in advance of his times in

catholicity of spirit, boldness of speculation, and freedom from the cant of party and sect.

The works of Mackintosh are numerous—though some of his best writings hardly deserve to be called *works*, in the incomplete state in which he left them. Besides those already mentioned, there may be noted many rich contributions to the Edinburgh Review, and other periodicals—some Parliamentary and other speeches—a beautiful life of Sir Thomas Moore—an acute and eloquent dissertation in the Encyclopædia Britannica on the Progress of Ethical Philosophy—a Fragment of English History concerning the Revolution of 1688, and several volumes of a History of England.

During his lifetime, Sir James was abused by the Tories; nor did the tirade cease at his death. Somewhat covetous of fame, and utterly reckless of gold, he left little to his children, except a brilliant reputation, and principles that can never die.

CHAPTER XI.

Religious Toleration—Eminent Nonconformists—The Puritans—Oliver Cromwell—The Pilgrims—The Corporation and Test Acts—Their Origin—Their Effects upon Dissenters and others—Their virtual Abandonment and final Repeal—The first Triumph of the Reformers.

FOR centuries it was a settled maxim in England, as elsewhere, that the only sure way to convert a heretic was to put him to death. All dominant sects have been persecutors in their turn. The Papists burnt the Protestants, the Episcopilians decapitated the Puritans, and the Puritans fined and imprisoned the Quakers. With the advancing light of civilization, the dungeon and the pillory were substituted for the scaffold and the stake. Then, as each sect had the power, it imprisoned, scourged, and cropped the others. At length, bigotry was satisfied with imposing pecuniary fines and civil disabilities on schismatics. Yet only a very few

years are past since the adherence to any sect but the one recognised by law involved many grievances, and disqualified from many of the most important offices, trusts, and privileges, in the country.

The struggle between Right and Prerogative, which has agitated the kingdom for the past half century, has not been confined to civil institutions. The mitre of the archbishop has not been deemed more sacred from scrutiny than the crown of the monarch. The Church as well as the State has been shaken by the progress of reform. But the tree of Toleration, whose fruits the people of England are now gathering, was planted long ago by hallowed hands. Distinguished among those who, in the expressive phrase of Burke, early preached and practised “the dissidence of Dissent, and the protestantism of the Protestant religion,” are Baxter, Owen, Calamy, Howe, Flavel, Henry, Bunyan, Bates, Doddridge, Watts, the Erskines and Browns—names illustrious in the annals of Nonconformity, whose writings exerted a wide influence among their contemporaries, and in our day are the text-books of the profoundest theologians, and the solace and guide of the most humble and devout among the unlearned.

In tracing the origin of recent reforms in the ecclesiastical institutions of England, due credit should be given to the Puritans of the times of Cromwell. In the convulsions of 1642-9, the English Church was overthrown, and Puritanism prevailed in the religion of the Commonwealth. The conspicuous leaders of the religious parties in the Parliament and the Commonwealth were distinguished for a strange mixture of austere piety and fervent enthusiasm—the natural product of the times in which they lived. No wonder if they were guilty of excesses. Their extravagances were the spontaneous outgush of the soul, when freedom of opinion, suddenly let loose from the thraldom of ages, found itself in a large place. Our Puritan fathers of the seventeenth century, by the recoil of the revolutionary wave, found themselves standing on the *terra firma* of the rights of conscience, high above the reach of the returning surge. №

wonder they indulged in free, and what some would call extravagant, speculations, and dealt with no very reverent hand when uprooting the system from which they had suffered so much. They were like captives suddenly released from the galling chains and stifling atmosphere of the slave ship, to free fields and a healthy atmosphere. It is an evidence of their sincerity that they carried their religion into everything, even their war and their polities. Bodies of their troops, dispensing with the carnal drum and fife, marched to the harmony of David's Psalms, sung to the tunes of Bedford and Old Hundred. Sermons, extending in length to several hours, were preached to the regiments, by chaplains mounted on artillery carriages. The camp of the revolutionists was not more the scene of rigid military drilling, than of earnest discussions on the cardinal points of their faith. The members of Parliament engaged in debates on original sin, and the scriptural mode of baptism, as well as upon laws concerning the civil and military affairs of the State. The very names which figure in the transactions of those times indicate the spirit of the age, and the bulletins of their victories are stern, yet reverent as the voice of doom in ancient prophecy.

OLIVER CROMWELL, the man of his age, was the type of old Puritanism, and the warrior-apostle of religious toleration. He maintained this priceless principle in stormy debate on the floor of Parliament, against the passive obedience of the Churchman, and the uniformity of the Presbyterian, and defended it amid the blaze and roar of battle against the brilliant gallantry of Rupert and the fiery assaults of Lesley. The "Ironsides" of the revolutionary forces, composed of the yeomen of Huntingdonshire, constituting the "Imperial guard" of the republican army, were raised and disciplined by Cromwell. Through training, in the camp and the conventicle, he fired them with a spirit of indomitable zeal, which, in years of conflict, on many a field, under his leadership, swept to ruin the legions arrayed against the Liberties of England. The historic pen of England has done injustice to him and to them. The reason is obvious. That

pen has not been held by impartial judges, but by their enemies. For a hundred years succeeding Cromwell's time, the English scholar and historian were dependent on the rich and noble, in Church and State, for patronage and bread. He must have been a rare man who coveted opprobrium and penury, by writing against civil and ecclesiastical institutions, hoary with age, and identified with the property and prospects of the great mass of his countrymen. Admitting their extravagances and their austere sectarianism, the impartial pen will record of the Puritans of 1645, that they exhibited many of the fruits of a sincere piety, and fostered the germ of that toleration which blends the dignity of free thought with the humility of Christian charity. Their descendants have exhibited all the heroic virtues of their fathers, tempered with the liberalizing influences of succeeding generations. Eminent for learning and piety, they have been the patrons of all the arts which adorn and purify mankind, and, in the darkest hours of the great cause of progress and reform, have been true to the good cause. The scion from the parent stock, planted by the Pilgrims at Plymouth in 1620, struck its roots deep into the American soil, and the States of the American Confederacy now repose under its overshadowing foliage, and pluck the fruits of civil and religious freedom from its spreading branches.

The exclusive power of the Established Church received a blow in the civil wars, from which it never fully recovered. At the Restoration, under Charles II., it took advantage of a real or fancied dread of the increase of Popery in the kingdom, to seduce Dissenters into an acquiescence in the adoption of laws favouring Episcopal supremacy, which were subsequently employed to oppress Protestant nonconformists. The chief of these were the *Corporation* and *Test Acts*, to the enactment, operation, and final repeal of which, the reader's attention is invited.

Blackstone complacently remarks : "In order the better to secure the Established Church against perils from nonconformists of all denominations, Infidels, Turks, Jews, Here-

ties, Papists, and Sectaries—there are two bulwarks erected, called the Corporation and Tests Acts. By the former (enacted in 1661), no person can be legally elected to any office relating to the government of any city or corporation, unless, within a twelvemonth before, he has received the sacrament of the Lord's Supper according to the rites of the Church of England ; and he is also enjoined to take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy at the time that he takes the oath of office ; or, in default of either of these requisites, such election shall be void. The other, called the Test Act (enacted in 1683), directs all officers, civil and military, to take the oaths and make the declaration against transubstantiation, in any of the King's courts at Westminster, or at the quarter sessions, within six months after their admission ; and also, within three months, to receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, according to the usage of the Church of England, in some public church, immediately after divine service and sermon, and to deliver into court a certificate thereof, signed by the minister and churchwardens, and also to prove the same by two credible witnesses, upon forfeiture of £500, and disability to hold the same office." The disabilities operated still further. By subsequent enactments, if any person held office without submitting to the tests, he was not only fined £500, but was incapacitated from prosecuting any action in the courts of law or equity, from being the guardian of a child, or the executor or administrator of a deceased person, or receiving a legacy. By subsequent legislation, the same tests, except the sacrament, were exacted of various classes of persons not holding civil or military offices, such as Dissenting ministers, practitioners of the law, teachers of schools or pupils, members of colleges who had attained the age of eighteen, &c.

As has been stated, the Corporation and Test Acts were passed when England was alarmed at a threatened invasion of Popery, and their penalties were intended to be aimed chiefly at Papists, though their sweeping provisions included all classes of nonconformists. The Protestant Dissenters, through fear or hatred of the Catholics, consented to be

placed under the general anathema, with a sort of understanding that, when the danger was over, they should be relieved from its pressure. They lived long enough to repent of their folly.

These acts were not only a gross violation of the rights of conscience, but were injurious to the public weal in many respects, and beneficial in none. Whilst they never made one Christian, they deprived the State of the services of many of its bravest citizens, drove much of its learning and piety from the pulpit, and genius and promise from the universities. By making the profession of a particular creed a necessary qualification for office, and the reception of the Lord's Supper according to a prescribed ritual the passport to civil and ecclesiastical advancement, they degraded the holiest rites of religion, brought annually to the communion-table of the Established Church thousands of hypocrites, and placed at its altars many insincere and unworthy clergymen. They were a perpetual source of annoyance to Dissenters who would not barter their faith for place and pelf, by subjecting them to prosecutions for refusing to qualify themselves for offices to which they had been maliciously elected, to be followed by ruinous fines or imprisonment. In a single year (1736) £50,700 were raised from fines imposed on Dissenters, who conscientiously refused to serve in the office of sheriff; and for a long time it was the custom of municipal corporations to elect Dissenters to office, and then enrich their coffers from fines levied upon them for refusing to receive the qualifying tests. At length, the common oppression united Protestant and Catholic Dissenters in a formidable union for the restoration of their common rights, and engendered a hatred of the Established Church, its clergy, and its ordinances, which twenty-five years of toleration have not been able to remove. It may, indeed, be unhesitatingly affirmed, in relation to the rise of nonconformity in England, that the exclusiveness of the Church, its obstinate demand for uniformity in trifles, and the haughty front it has too often presented to Dissenters who were open to conciliation, have

made twenty nonconformists for every one that has withdrawn from its communion from conscientious scruples.

Repeated efforts were made for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. Protestant Dissenters, after suffering their penalties for nearly a century, had grown numerous and influential, when Parliament, instead of boldly meeting the question of repeal, began a temporizing policy, and grudgingly ameliorated a grievance which it had not the grace wholly to abrogate. It commenced the practice of passing, at the close of each session, amnesty bills, exempting Dissenters, who had violated the acts, from the operation of their penalties; and so framing the bills as to cover not only past offences, but all which might be committed before the close of the next session, when another bill would be enacted. By this means Dissenters were relieved from practical oppression under these acts, for some eighty years previous to their final repeal.

But the Protestant Dissenters were meanwhile rapidly increasing, both in England and Scotland, in numbers and influence; and this intelligent and high-minded class refused to remain longer content to receive rights inherent and immutable, as an annual boon from the legislature. The struggle for unqualified repeal never ceased till the disgraceful acts were blotted from the statute-book. On the 26th of February 1828, the first successful blow was aimed against the theoretical uniformity which had existed as a legal fiction, and been assumed as inherent in the supremacy of the Church of England ever since the Restoration. Lord John Russell moved that the House resolve itself into a committee to take into consideration the regulations of the Corporation and Test Acts. A stormy debate followed, in which bigotry and intolerance made a desperate stand for victory. A division showed 237 for the motion, and 193 against it. In committee, Ministers entreated earnestly for delay, but a resolution was adopted for the instant repeal of the acts. A bill, based on this resolution, was introduced, and passed its second reading. The Bishop of Oxford, Lord Eldon, and other uncompromising maintainers of the exist-

ing state of things, offered the most determined opposition, but all in vain. After witnessing the temper of the House, Mr. Peel declared that he was prepared to dismiss from his mind every idea of adhering to the existing laws, and only asked for some slight modifications in the pending bill. His request being complied with, Ministers withdrew from the contest, and speedily the Corporation and Test Acts, the offspring of a bigoted age, ceased to be the law of the realm.

This was the first cardinal measure which the modern reformers had carried through Parliament, during a conflict of nearly half a century; the abolition of the slave trade and the melioration of the criminal code having been advocated by the chiefs of both parties. It was hailed as an era in the struggle of the people for the restoration of their rights, and the full recognition of all their constitutional privileges; the harbinger of better days to come; and was the first in a series of still more glorious achievements.

CHAPTER XII.

Ireland—The Causes of its Debasement—Dublin—Mementoes of the Captivity of the Country—Movements toward Catholic Emancipation—Its Early Champions—Mr. Grattan—Mr. Plunkett—Rev. Sydney Smith.

BEFORE specially considering Catholic Emancipation, I will notice two or three persons who participated in the long struggle which prepared the way for this great measure of religious toleration. The act of emancipation extended to Catholics alike in all parts of the United Kingdom. But as the large majority of the professors of that faith dwelt in Ireland, where they composed nearly six-eighths of its people, and as it was there that the long and fierce conflict was waged which ultimately compelled English Protestants to yield to their Catholic fellow-subjects the rights of tol-

ration which they themselves enjoyed, this was regarded as emphatically an Irish reform.

Ireland! What a throng of associated ideas start to life at the mention of that name. How varied their aspect—how contradictory their character—how antagonistic the emotions they kindle, the sentiments they inspire! Ireland—the land of genius and degradation, of vast resources and pinching poverty, of noble deeds and revolting crimes, of valiant resistance to tyranny, and obsequious submission to usurpation! Ireland—the land of splendid orators, charming poets, and daring soldiers; the land of ignorance, abjectness, and beggary—measureless in its capacities, stinted in its products—a strange anomaly, a complication of contradictions!

Though this portraiture, sketched by no unfriendly hand, be but a rude outline, does it not shadow forth the original? Why are its darker colours no less faithful delineations of the prominent features than the brighter? The very problem which a whole century has not been able to solve! The Tory will point to what he calls “the malign character of the Irish” as the prime cause of the debasement and wretchedness which exist among them. The Whig, whose zeal for political Protestantism has influenced his judgment, will assign the general prevalence of the Roman Catholic religion in the island as the only source of the evils which afflict it. The Irishman, who regards his native isle as the greenest and fairest the sun ever shone upon, will tell you that the degradation and misery which so long debased and crushed such masses of his countrymen must be ascribed to the fact, that Ireland could once boast of national independence. None of these, however, will satisfactorily account for all the phases of the picture. They are all, indeed, equally the deductions of partiality or prejudice, and leave out of consideration the elements of Ireland’s past history on which its present condition as surely depends as does the maturity of each individual on his training and advantages in childhood and youth. Unhappily, at no period of its past history has Ireland shared in those advantages which have

made England and Scotland what they are. It lay beyond the reach of nearly all the influences which, both in ancient and medieval times, carried forward the sister island like a vessel upborne by the advancing tide. The Roman invasion, which, during the first four centuries of our era, initiated England into the arts, civilization, and polity of ancient Rome, never reached the shores of Ireland. The subsequent intrusion of Angles, Saxons, Danes, and Northmen, was known in Ireland only by their earlier piratical inroads. They left there no traces of those Teutonic institutions from which the whole system of free constitutional government, both in Britain and the United States of America, has sprung. The consequence was, that when the Norman conquest introduced a new element into the united monarchy of Anglo-Saxon England, Ireland was still in a condition not greatly in advance of Celtic England when Julius Cæsar first invaded its shores. It possessed no unity as a kingdom, but was composed of a number of independent and often rival petty states or clans, whose rule of government was still mainly based on the patriarchal ideas of Celtic clanship.

Left to itself, Ireland would, doubtless, have assumed some form of unity, and developed a Government of its own. But placed as it was alongside the rival kingdoms of Scotland and England, each far in advance of it in all that constitutes social and political civilization—whatever may have been its progress in artistic skill, or even in bardic or ecclesiastic literature—it was nearly as impossible that it should be left to work out its own gradual system of self-civilizing and political development, as that the Indians of America should be left unmolested to pursue the same course alongside of the European colonists of the New World. The Union, still so unpopular with a certain class in Ireland, was once no less so in Scotland. With the latter, however, it has proved the source of its chief prosperity; and there can be little doubt that it is no less surely destined to do so with Ireland also, now that the Government of the United Kingdom is, not in name only, but in reality, constitutional, popular, and free.

Ireland has already been one of the largest sharers in the advantages resulting from the return to the practical principles of the constitutional representative government of Britain, now permanently guaranteed by the Reform Bill. Catholic emancipation; the extended franchise; the abolition of close boroughs; corporation reform; the extension of education; the establishment of the Queen's Colleges, open, without distinction of sects, to all; with a freedom from some taxes, and a lighter share in the burden of others, than either Scotland or England—are all advantages, in the majority of which Ireland has not only shared in the liberties achieved by the British people, but has received an augmented portion to atone for rights denied to her in earlier times. They who would still speak of Ireland as a country oppressed and enslaved, or subjected to disabilities unknown to other parts of the United Kingdom, must obstinately shut their eyes to all that has been achieved for British freedom and political emancipation during the present century. We shall now glance at a few of the most remarkable of the Irish leaders, who shared with the Reformers of England, sketched in preceding chapters, in bringing about these glorious and happy results.

Prominent among the early champions of Catholic emancipation stood Mr. GRATTAN. To prove that, for nearly a century past, Ireland has constantly exhibited on the floor of the British Commons some of the most eloquent men who have swayed the councils of the United Kingdom, it is only necessary to mention the names of Burke, Flood, Sheridan, Grattan, Plunkett, O'Connell, and Shiels. Perhaps Canning should also be included in the list. Both his parents were Irish, and he was, as it were, accidentally born in England. In this galaxy Grattan shone unrivalled, except by Burke and Canning. He was the equal of the latter in many respects—his superior in some. As a practical Parliamentarian, he ranks scarcely below the former. And he stands at the head of all of his countrymen who have been strictly *Irish* members, representing Irish constituencies.

Graduating at Dublin, and entering the Middle Temple,

London, in 1767, when just turned twenty-one, Grattan was an eager observer, from the galleries of the Lords and Commons, of the fierce struggles of North, Grenville, Chatham, and Burke, then in the zenith of their fame. Throwing Coke and Plowden aside, he employed his leisure hours in writing sketches of these "Battles of the Giants," for the perusal of his Irish friends. He became enamoured of politics, and resolved to shine in the Parliament of his native island. Some of his sketches found their way into the Dublin newspapers, and their point and power gave plausibility to the charge at one time made, that he was the author of "Junius." In answer to a direct application to him, in 1805, to know if he were the famous author, he laconically replied:—

"SIR,—I am not 'Junius,' but your good-wisher and
obedient servant,

HENRY GRATTAN."

On his return to Ireland, he immediately joined the opposition to the Vice-Regal Government, opening the attack by a series of newspaper articles in vindication of Irish rights, which attracted much attention, and was nearly subjecting him to a royal prosecution. From that moment he gave his whole mind and soul to public affairs, and during the subsequent fifty years, there are few pages of Irish history which do not record his name associated with some measure for the amelioration of Irish wrongs. He is the author of what is now called "Irish Nationality." On the accession of George III. to the throne, the government of Ireland was then, as it is even now, the chief difficulty of Ministers. During the American Revolutionary War, intestine commotions, from the incendiary proceedings of the "Whiteboys" (a rabble band of lawless incendiaries, who fired the houses of landlords, and now and then put to death a non-complying tenant), and the danger of invasion from France, impelled the middle classes to petition Government for succour and protection. They were frankly told that no aid could be afforded them, and they must take care of

themselves. Acting on this license, a volunteer militia was enrolled in all parts of the island, the Government furnishing arms, which swelled till it numbered 100,000 men, of the bone and sinew of Ireland. The "Whiteboys" shrunk into insignificance, the threatened invasion was abandoned, and the popular leaders, who had been active in mustering the volunteers, took advantage of their strong position to demand the removal of onerous restrictions on Irish commerce, and the amelioration of the Catholic penal code. It was the most healthful of all sources of national combined action, and its fruits have been of the most beneficial character. The Government essentially modified the commercial regulations between the two countries, and though some of the darker features of the code still remained, an important step had been taken in the right direction. Unfortunately, though by no means unnaturally, the idea was now adopted that the greatest grievance which Ireland had to complain of was the supremacy of the British Parliament over Irish affairs; and thus, instead of seeking to co-operate with the patriots and reformers of England and Scotland, those of Ireland assumed an attitude which placed them too often in the position of antagonists, and, if carried out by each, must have introduced rivalry and dissension as a permanent element in the *United Kingdom*, where union is so essential to its power. Happily we are witnessing the first steps towards a better state of things, and may now look forward to an increasing community of feeling and interests, and a oneness of aim and purpose, binding England, Scotland, and Ireland together, as one people sharing in rights, liberties, and political and commercial interests, common alike to all.

Meanwhile, however, we must follow out the movements of those who aimed at establishing the liberties of Ireland by rendering her as nearly as possible a stranger to Britain, instead of so incorporating her with it as to make her a mutual sharer in its progress towards freedom, prosperity, and true national greatness. The following were the proceedings of the Irish leaders towards the accomplishment of

an end the whole tendency of which was to make the British people as indifferent to the interests of Ireland as they were to those of the kingdom of Hanover—these linked to Britain by a precisely similar tie. The concessions secured as the fruits of the patriotic enrolment of the Irish volunteers, seemed the beginning of a series of political triumphs. Emboldened by success, an attempt was made to procure the repeal of the laws by which the supremacy of the British Parliament over Irish affairs was established. Flood, the rival of Grattan, demanded a distinct disavowal by the British Parliament, of the right to govern Ireland. Grattan, who had the hearts of his countrymen in his hand, avowed that he would be satisfied if Britain would repeal all existing laws interfering with Irish rights. The measure was adopted, and the Irish Parliament became the supreme Legislature of Ireland, subject to the supervision of the King in Council. Ireland was intoxicated with joy, and, in the fervour of their gratitude, the countrymen of Grattan voted him £50,000. Thus, in 1782, was a *quasi* legislative independence granted to Ireland. It was, however, in reality only the supremacy of a party, from whom the Roman Catholics of Ireland—in other words, the great body of the people—had nothing to hope; and violently as the change was opposed by many who had the true interests of Ireland at heart, we may look back now to the repeal of that rash measure—whatever may have been the motives of those who did accomplish it—as an important step towards the accomplishment of the liberty since achieved. Only eighteen years afterward, it was obliterated in the Act of Union. It was in allusion to the rise and fall of this legislative independence that Grattan, years subsequently, touchingly said, “I watched its cradle; I followed its bier.” During these eighteen years he did all that great talents and vigilant patriotism could to secure the prosperity and promote the honour of his native land. The leader of the liberals in the Irish Parliament, he resisted the English ministerial party, and spurned their bribes, and appealed to Ireland to be true to herself, and to maintain her nationality. In reality,

however, this Irish Parliament, which some now speak of as if it had been the palladium of its nationality and liberty, was fit only to be compared with the high Tory Parliaments of England in the reign of Charles II. It had, indeed, its patriot members—described here—but as a body, it was essentially composed of the most bigoted of the dominant Orange party of Ireland; and the prospect of reform was dark enough, where, instead of a mere struggle of rival political parties, as in England, it threatened to become a civil war between the Saxon and the Celtic races which had been so long in juxtaposition without intermingling or losing sight of their ancient feuds and animosities. The influence of predominant and intolerant Irish Orangeism, far more than of English supremacy led to the terrible civil commotions that followed, though the English government of that day is by no means to be acquitted of its share in the misgovernment which drove the exasperated people into the rebellion of 1798-9, and led to so much judicial bloodshed and military execution, to which we now look back with equal shame and regret. It was in the latter year, 1799, that Pitt proposed the Union. No wonder that at such a time Irish Patriots should view it as a measure fraught with destruction to the liberties of their country. Undaunted by the defection around him, Grattan, in the Irish Commons, resisted it with such vehement eloquence, that it was postponed till the next year. In the meantime, British gold proved more potent than its bayonets. Half the Irish Parliament was bribed into compliance with the Government plan, and in 1800, after a last effort to rally his countrymen in support of their coveted national independence, Grattan joined the Irish patriots on their new battle-ground in St. Stephen's Chapel.

Grattan entered the British Parliament in 1805, where he remained till his death in 1820. Ever in the front rank of reformers, he was the special champion of Catholic emancipation, divided the House almost every year, and frequently two or three times in a session, on various propositions looking to ultimate emancipation, but without success;

and in his last effort was defeated only by a majority of two—an earnest that the “good time” was coming. He met with the common misfortune of displeasing the ultras of both parties. He asked too little to please the extreme Catholics—too much to win the favour of the extreme Protestants. He asked for a part, and got nothing; yet let us not imagine he asked in vain. It has been said that O’Connell, by demanding the whole, got the greater part. O’Connell, however, only entered into his labours, and was fortunate in being cast on the later day of final struggle and of triumph.

Grattan was a model orator. His style had the genius, the enthusiasm, the brilliancy, the pathos, which mark Hibernian eloquence, and was divested of many of those peculiarities which often mar the forensic displays of a country where, as an accomplished Irishman has said, “you may kick an orator out of every bush.” If he was fertile in illustrations, he was no less abundant in principles; his speech was replete with epigram, abounded in terse reasoning, sparkled with wit, and yet was luminous in its calmer statements; if it blighted with its sarcasm, it mellowed with its pathos; it could wither a grovelling enemy with its scorn, and persuade a manly opponent with its logic. Nor did he overlay the solid parts of his oratory with the lighter graces of declamation, or smother them under a redundancy of poetical illustration, as is too often the fault of his countrymen. He was a master of a compressed, nervous, rapid, racy style of argumentation—the very perfection of the art in a Parliamentary debater.

On the death of this great man, the cause of Catholic emancipation fell under the guidance of Mr. PLUNKETT, who, next to him, was the ablest Irish representative in the Commons. Sir James Mackintosh sketches him, in one of his dashing conversational profiles, thus: “If Plunkett had come earlier into Parliament, so as to have learned the trade, he would probably have excelled all our orators. He and Councillor Phillips (or O’Garish, as he is nicknamed here) are at the opposite points of the scale. O’Garish’s style is pitiful to the last degree. He ought,

by common consent, to be driven from the bar." Plunkett brought to his work a true Irish heart, talents of the first class, eloquence cast in a rare mould, and a reputation unsurpassed at the Irish bar. He bore a conspicuous part in all those violent throes, in and out of Parliament, in regard to Catholic emancipation, which convulsed the country from 1820 to 1829, and drove Ireland to the borders of rebellion. He won several partial triumphs over Ministers, preliminary to the granting of the great boon in the latter year, when O'Connell appeared at the bar of the Commons to demand his seat for the county of Clare. When the Whigs rose to power in 1830, Mr. Plunkett was made Lord Chancellor of Ireland.

This brief sketch of the early friends of Catholic emancipation would be incomplete without the name of SYDNEY SMITH, one of the founders of the Edinburgh Review. Of all English Protestants out of Parliament, he rendered the most effective aid to that cause. By articles in that influential periodical, by speeches, sermons, and pamphlets, he pressed the Catholic claims upon public attention during twenty-five years, in a style which no man but Sydney Smith could use. He did not so much argue the claims of the Catholics as ridicule the fears of their opponents; and never were wit, drollery, humour, irony, and sarcasm, rained down upon a bad cause in greater variety or rarer quality. He fairly overwhelmed the High Church party in their own absurdities. His ten letters, signed Peter Plymley, addressed to "My Brother Abraham, who lives in the country," are the very effervescence of ridicule. They will be read when test acts are remembered only to be execrated. The secret of the true authorship of these letters was long maintained. How far the means adopted for this purpose, and afterwards boldly avowed by their author, may be defended on strictly conscientious grounds, the reader shall determine. In the preface to his works, Mr. Smith says—"I have printed in this collection the Letters of Peter Plymley. The Government of that day took great pains to find out the author. All that they could find was, that they were brought to Mr.

Budd, the publisher, by the Earl of Lauderdale. Somehow or other, it came to be conjectured that I was that author. I have always denied it; but finding that I deny it in vain, I have thought it might be as well to include the letters in this collection. They had an immense circulation at the time, and I think above 20,000 copies were sold." This is cool; but the letters were *cooler*. They gibbeted the absurd opposition which the leaders of the Church party made to Emancipation "without benefit of clergy." The services of Messrs. O'Connell and Shiel will be noticed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XIII.

Catholic Emancipation—Antiquity and Power of the Papal Church—Treaty of Limerick—Catholic Penal Code of Ireland—Opinions of Penn, Montesquieu, Burke, and Blackstone, concerning it—Its Amelioration—Catholic Association of 1823—The Hour and the Man—Daniel O'Connell elected for Clare—Alarm in Downing Street—Duke of Wellington's Decision—Passage of the Emancipation Bill—Services of O'Connell and Shiel—The latter as an Orator.

THE antiquity and power of the Romish Hierarchy, and the sway it now holds over 150,000,000 of people diffused through all quarters of the globe, are among the most extraordinary facts in the history of the Christian era. But now it may be that the combined efforts of Protestantism to overthrow it will be more successful than they have proved to be since the Reformation, though in his review of Ranke's History of the Popes, speaking of the Romish Church, Macaulay says—"She saw the commencement of all the governments, and of all the ecclesiastical establishments, that now exist in the world; and we feel no assurance that she is not destined to see the end of them all. She was great and respected before the Saxon had set foot on Britain—before the Frank had passed the Rhine—when

Grecian eloquence still flourished at Antioch—when idols were still worshipped in the Temple of Mecca. And she may still exist in undiminished vigour, when some traveller from New Zealand shall, in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's."

Amongst the adherents to the Papal faith, none have shown a steadier attachment to it, through all vicissitudes, than the Catholics of Ireland. For centuries it has been the dominant, and at times the almost exclusive religion, of that country. Persecutions the most bigoted have not abated the zeal and tenacity with which the Irish have practised and clung to their hereditary creed. The battle of the Boyne, in 1690, was followed by the treaty of Limerick, by which William of Orange guaranteed, in the most solemn terms, religious toleration to his Irish Catholic subjects. The treaty was to be binding upon him, his heirs, and successors. But a fear of the return of the banished Catholic princes of the house of Stuart, which we have seen was the origin of similar measures in Britain, induced England to disregard the stipulations of the treaty of Limerick. Partly by the direct legislation of the British Parliament, and partly through the medium of the Orange party in Ireland, the Catholic Penal Code was introduced into that country. Like other branches of British law, it was a piece of patch-work, the contribution of many reigns. It received its worst features within twenty years after the treaty of Limerick. I will give a summary of its main provisions.

FIRST, as to persons professing the Catholic religion. No Papist could take the real estate of his ancestor, either by descent or purchase, nor purchase any real estate, nor take a lease for more than thirty-one years; and if the profits of such lease exceeded a certain rate, the land went to any Protestant informer. The conveyance of real estate in trust for a Papist was void; nor could he inherit any, nor be in a line of entail, but the estate descended to the next Protestant heir, as if the Papist were dead. A Papist who turned Protestant succeeded to the family estate, and an increase

of jointure was allowed to Papist wives on their turning Protestant ; whilst, on the other hand, a Protestant who turned Papist, or procured another to turn, was guilty of high treason. Papist fathers were debarred, on a penalty of £500, from being guardians of their children ; and a Papist minor, who avowed himself a Protestant, was immediately delivered to a Protestant guardian. No Papist could marry a Protestant, and the priest celebrating the marriage was guilty of felony. Papists could not be barristers ; and, barristers being Protestants, if they married Papists, were to be treated as Papists. It was felony for a Papist to teach a school ; to say or hear mass subjected him to fine and a year's imprisonment ; to aid in sending another abroad to be educated in the Popish religion subjected the parties to a fine, and disabled them to sue in law or equity, to be executors and administrators, to take any legacy or gift, to hold any office, and to a forfeiture of all their chattels, and all real estate for life. No Papist could hold office, civil or military, sit in Parliament, or vote at elections. Protestants robbed by privateers, in a war with a Popish prince, were to be indemnified by levies on the property of Roman Catholics alone.

*SECOND, as to Popish recusants,—*that is, persons not attending the Established Church. Such Papists could hold no office, nor keep arms, nor come within ten miles of London, on pain of £100, nor travel above five miles from home without license, on pain of forfeiting all goods, nor come to Court on pain of £100, nor bring any action at law or equity ; and to marry, baptize, or bury such an one, subjected the offending priest to heavy penalties. A recusant married woman forfeited two-thirds of her dower or jointure, nor could she be the executrix of her deceased husband, nor have any part of his goods ; and during coverture she might be imprisoned unless her husband redeemed her at the rate of £10 per month. All other recusant females must renounce Popery or quit the realm ; and if they did not leave in a reasonable time, or afterwards returned, they could be put to death.

THIRD, *as to Popish priests.* Severe penalties were inflicted on them for discharging their ecclesiastical functions anywhere, and if done in England, they were liable to perpetual imprisonment. Any such priest who was born in England, and, having left, should come in from abroad, was guilty of treason, and all who harboured him might be punished with death. Rewards were given for discovering Popish clergy, and any person refusing to disclose what he knew of their saying mass, or teaching pupils, might be imprisoned a year. Besides this, they were subject to all the penalties and disabilities of lay Papists. A Popish priest who turned Protestant was entitled to £30 per annum.

FOURTH. Papists were excluded from grand juries; in all trials growing out of the Penal Code, the juries were to be Protestants; and in any trial on statutes for strengthening the Protestant interest, a Papist might be peremptorily challenged.

In surveying the lineaments of such a code, the heart of every honest freeman must glow with indignation. It was inflicted on Catholic Ireland by Protestant England, in the name of that Church which claims to be the pillar and ground of the Christian faith. Well might the mild William Penn be aroused to denounce it as inhuman, when pleading before the House of Commons for toleration to the Quakers. Well might the sagacious Montesquieu characterize it as cold-blooded tyranny. Well might the philosophic Burke describe it "as a machine of wise and elaborate contrivance, noted for its vicious perfection; and as admirably fitted for the oppression, impoverishment, and degradation of a people and the debasement in them of human nature itself, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man." Even Blackstone was forced to say of this code: "These laws are seldom exerted to their utmost rigour; and indeed, if they were, it would be very difficult to excuse them." Though in the times when the "No-Popery" cry was at its height, these laws were rigorously enforced, yet, as the mellowing light of civilization increased, the more cruel enactments lay a dead letter on the statute-book. But the whole hung

over the head of the Catholic, like the sword of Damocles, ready to drop at the breath of any persecuting zealot or malicious informer.

This Code, one of the most impolitic which narrow-minded bigotry ever devised, was essentially ameliorated in 1779, and again in 1793. Among other concessions, the elective franchise was extended to Catholics, though they were still excluded from Parliament. But he who would bring himself within the pale of these ameliorations, must submit to many annoying requisitions, in the form of registrations, oaths, subscriptions, declarations, &c. In a word, down to 1829, when it was finally repealed, many of the worst features of the Code remained, making it an offence for six-eighths of the people of Ireland to worship according to the dictates of their consciences ; subjecting them to degrading tests or heavy penalties for exercising civil and social rights ; and compelling them to feel themselves aliens to the Government under which they were born, and to whose support they were contributing their blood in war, and their money in peace. Against all this we may enter our protest, while holding at arm's length the Catholic ritual. To worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience, without molestation or fear, is the right of every man, whether he be Catholic or Protestant.

Notwithstanding the important amendments made in the Catholic Code in 1779 and 1793, its remaining disabilities and penalties hung over Ireland like a dark cloud, debarring the large majority of the people from freely participating in civil and religious freedom. In the latter year, an association was organized in Dublin, to agitate and petition for the Repeal of the Union with England. Though ultimately rent in pieces by internal commotions, it was the germ of all subsequent organizations for the same objects. During the succeeding thirty years, this question frequently convulsed Parliament and the country. The remedies which the British Government of that day usually prescribed for the political and religious diseases of Ireland were insurrection acts, coercion acts, suspensions of the *habeas corpus*, capital

trials, hangings, and transportation. Happily that state of things is past, no less in Britain than in Ireland.

The year 1823 saw a bright star of promise arise on the dark and troubled horizon of Ireland. The exigencies of the times had healed the feuds of hostile factions among the Irish liberal party, and they closed hands in defence of their common liberties. In May of that year, Daniel O'Connell and Richard Lalor Shiel, who had long been estranged from each other, accidentally met among the mountains of Wicklow, at the house of a friend. A reconciliation took place, and they resolved to form a league for the deliverance of their Roman Catholic countrymen. That same month they organized the "Catholic Association" in Dublin, on the plan of admitting all persons, of whatever sect or party, who approved of its objects. It early enrolled some of the first minds in the island, and an agitation was commenced which was soon felt in the farthest corner of the kingdom. It made the realm ring with the appeals of its orators, crowded Parliament with its petitions, and scattered its tracts and circulars over the country. O'Connell and Shiel were the life and soul of the association; the former being its chief manager, the latter its most brilliant advocate.

Undoubtedly some of the transactions of this powerful body were of an inflammatory character. But it gave concentration and rational aim to the efforts of the Irish party, and, by exciting the hope of relief, withdrew from them the temptation to illegal acts of violence. The justice of its object in the state of things which then prevailed, and the contempt which its petitions received from Parliament, ultimately rallied to its standard the whole of the Catholics and an influential portion of the dissenting Protestants of Ireland. Alarmed at its power, the Parliament, in March 1825, after a stormy debate, passed an act terminating its existence. Immediately after the adjournment of Parliament, the association was reorganized, with a constitution which did not come within the law. This was the best means of operation that could have been devised. The

Government finding that the agitation could not be silenced, proceeded in the following session to devise various plans for ameliorating the condition of Ireland. Their efforts, however, proved abortive, and after spending five months in vehement discussion, Parliament abandoned the country to the rage of party spirit, and it was left for the well-directed labours of the association to prevent it from plunging into anarchy and revolution.

At the general election in the summer of 1826, the friends of reform took the field, and achieved some signal triumphs in returning members to Parliament. The Irish tenantry, the "forty-shilling freeholders," who had generally been supple instruments in the hands of the Protestant landlord, had, by the labours of the association, been converted into an engine to overthrow the opponents of reform. They now voted with the Emancipators, as they were then called.

Canning rose to power in 1827. His professed regard for Catholic relief induced Ireland to wait and see what would come from his Ministry, but his early death quenched all hope of succour from his administration. After the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts the next year, a struggle for partial relief to the Catholics, which resulted successfully in the Commons, but was defeated in the Lords, only stimulated the friends of reform to take a bolder step. The hour to strike the decisive blow had come, and it had brought with it the man.

In 1828, Mr. V. Fitzgerald, the member for Clare, received a place in the Cabinet, thus vacating his seat in the Commons. He was a candidate for re-election. The Catholic Association requested Mr. O'Connell to become a candidate for the vacancy, and in his own person seek to establish the right of Catholics to sit in Parliament. He immediately issued an address to the electors of Clare, in which, among other things, he said: "Fellow-countrymen, your county wants a representative. I respectfully solicit your suffrages to raise me to that station. . . . You will be told I am not qualified to be elected. The assertion is untrue. I am qualified to be elected, and to be your representative. It is

true that, as a Catholic, I cannot, and of course never will, take the oaths at present prescribed to members of Parliament. But the authority which created those oaths can abrogate them. And I entertain a confident hope that, if you elect me, the most bigoted of our enemies will see the necessity of removing from the chosen representative of the people an obstacle which would prevent him from doing his duty to his king and to his country."

The address fell like a thunderbolt upon the enemies of Emancipation. The friends of Fitzgerald would not believe it was the intention of O'Connell seriously to contest the canvass. The speedy arrival of two of his agents in Clare dispelled their doubts. The county was in a fever of excitement. The day of election approached. Shiel addressed a concourse of electors. His eloquence inspired a wild enthusiasm in their hearts. The time for the arrival of the great agitator himself was fixed. An immense throng hailed him, with banners, music, and shoutings. The trial day came, and the candidates appeared before the assembled thousands of the electors. Fitzgerald delivered an able speech. O'Connell followed him with a magnificent harangue, which swayed the passions of the peasantry as forests wave when swept by the tempest. A violent contest ensued, and at its close the high-sheriff declared that "Daniel O'Connell, Esq., was duly elected a member of the Commons House of Parliament for the county of Clare."

This unexpected result carried dismay into the councils of Downing Street; for they knew that O'Connell was soon to appear in London and demand his seat in Parliament. His fame was no stranger to the place where his person was unknown. The agitation of the previous five years had shaken Ireland from the Giant's Causeway to Cape Clear and had ever and anon caused the walls of St. Stephen's to tremble. And now, what seemed so terrible in the distance, was to be brought to its very doors. Parliament was not in session; but it had been announced that Ministers would oppose Mr. O'Connell's entrance into the Commons. The declaration drove Ireland to the brink of civil war. The

commander of the forces conveyed to the Ministry the alarming intelligence, that the troops were fraternizing with the people, and their loyalty could not be relied on in the event of an outbreak. All minds not blinded by bigotry felt that the great right for which the association had contended must be conceded. The Duke of Wellington, then at the head of the Government, saw that the hour had come when either his prejudices or his power must be surrendered. He decided that the former must yield. Parliament was convened on the 5th of March 1829. On the first day of the session, Mr. Peel moved that the House go into committee, "to take into consideration the civil disabilities of his Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects." After two days' debate, it prevailed. A bill of Emancipation was introduced. Ancient prejudice was aroused, and in five days sent in a thousand petitions against its passage; but the bill passed, after a severe struggle, and Mr. Peel carried it to the Lords. A fierce contest ensued, but then also it was forced through by the Iron Duke. On the 13th of April it received the royal assent, and was hailed with joy by the friends of religious freedom, in England as well as in Ireland.

Mr. O'Connell appeared in the House to claim his seat. Having been elected before the act of Emancipation, the ancient oaths were tendered to him. He declined to take them. After tedious hearings before the Committee of Elections, extending through several weeks, and a powerful address at the bar of the House in support of his own right, his seat was declared vacant. He returned to Ireland, and was everywhere hailed as "the Liberator of his country." After passing unopposed through the form of a new election at Clare, he repaired to Westminster, and took his seat in the British House of Commons.

For this concession to the great principles of Toleration, the age is indebted to the Catholic Association, organized and sustained by O'Connell and Shiel, the Castor and Pollux of Emancipation. No two men were more diverse in the elements of their characters, and no two more harmoniously blended in the accomplishment of a common object. Each

supplied what was wanting in the other. O'Connell was unsurpassed in planning, organizing, and executing, and his unique and vigorous eloquence could stir to its profoundest depths the excitable people he had to address. Shiel was rich in the highest gifts of oratory—ornate, classical, impassioned—and could rouse the enthusiasm and intoxicate the imaginations of the more refined classes of his countrymen. The one contributed to the work the learning and skill of an acute lawyer, the knowledge of a well-read historian of his country, an intimate acquaintance with all the details of the great question at issue, and business capacities of the first order. The other gave to it a transcendent intellect, adorned with the genius of a poet, the graces of a rhetorician, and the embellishments of a polite scholar. Both consecrated to it intense nationality of feeling, unfailing perseverance, and indomitable courage. Each yielded to the other the exclusive occupancy of the peculiar field of labour to which his talents were best adapted.

Mr. SHIEL was born in 1791. In his youth, he won considerable literary reputation as the author of two tragedies, *Eradne* and *The Apostate*, and of some beautiful essays in the periodicals. He early acquired high reputation at the Dublin bar as an advocate. But “the guage and measure of the man” were known to a comparatively small circle till his splendid oratorical displays in defence of the principles and objects of the Catholic Association made his fame co-extensive with the empire. The result of his services has been recorded. The Emancipation bill opened to him the doors of Parliament. He entered St. Stephen's Hall in 1831, heralded by a reputation surpassing that with which most orators have been content to leave that field of their triumphs. It is the highest proof of the solidity of his reputation, that in this new arena he increased the brilliancy of his fame; furnishing a marked exception to the rule, that orators who have become famous at the bar, or on the platform, have failed to meet the public expectation on encountering the severer tests of the House of Commons.

Several years ago I heard Mr. Shiel deliver a speech in

Parliament, and I retain a vivid impression of his powers. He seemed the very embodiment of all that was gorgeous and beautiful in the arts of rhetoric and oratory. His sentences seemed to rush forth with the velocity of a mountain torrent, while for an hour and a half he poured upon the house a ceaseless shower of metaphor, simile, declamation, and appeal, lighted with the brilliant flashes of wit, mingled with glittering and pungent sarcasm. Though not belonging to the best school of oratory, he was master of that in which he was trained. Though polished in the extreme, they are pure ore, and sparkle with real gems. His ornaments were lavishly put on, but never selected from the tinsel and mock diamond mine. His defect was, that he too much discarded logic, and revelled in rhetoric. In discussing even an appropriation bill, his figures were drawn less from the annual budget of the Chancellor of the Exchequer than from the flowery springs of Helicon. He aimed to reach the heart, not through the reason, but the reason and the heart through the imagination. While his oratory was sometimes deficient in logical power and strength, it partook largely of those embellishments that gave brilliancy and grace to the eloquence of his most distinguished countrymen.

As a specimen of his oratory, I subjoin an extract from one of his speeches. In 1837, Lord Lyndhurst declared, in the Upper House, that the Irish were “aliens in blood and religion.” Shortly after, Mr. Shiel thus repelled the charge in the Commons. Lord Lyndhurst was a listener:—

“Where was Arthur, Duke of Wellington, when those words were uttered? Methinks he should have started up to disclaim them.

‘The battles, sieges, fortunes that he passed’

ought to have come back upon him. He ought to have remembered that, from the earliest achievement in which he displayed that military genius which has placed him foremost in the annals of modern warfare, down to that last and surpassing combat which has made his name imperishable—

from Assaye to Waterloo—the Irish soldiers, with whom your armies were filled, were the inseparable auxiliaries to the glory with which his unparalleled successes have been crowned. Whose were the athletic arms that drove your bayonets at Vimiera through the phalanxes that never reeled in the shock of war before? What desperate valour climbed the steeps and filled the moats of Badajos? All, all his victories should have rushed and crowded back upon his memory: Vimiera, Badajos, Salamanca, Albuera, Toulouse—and, last of all, the greatest. Tell me, for you were there—I appeal to the gallant soldier before me (pointing to Sir Henry Hardinge), who bears, I know, a generous heart in an intrepid breast—tell me, for you must needs remember, on that day when the destinies of mankind were trembling in the balance; while death fell in showers upon them; when the artillery of France, levelled with the precision of the most deadly science, played upon them; when her legions, incited by the voice, inspired by the example of their mighty leader, rushed again and again to the contest; tell me if for an instant, when to hesitate for an instant was to be lost, the ‘aliens’ blanched? And when, at length, the moment for the last decisive movement had arrived; when the valour, so long wisely checked, was at last let loose; when, with words familiar but immortal, the great captain exclaimed, ‘Up, lads, and at them!—tell me if Catholic Ireland with less heroic valour than the natives of your own glorious isle precipitated herself upon the foe! The blood of England, Scotland, Ireland, flowed in the same stream, on the same field. When the chill morning dawned, their dead lay cold and stark together. In the same deep pit their bodies were deposited. The green spring is now breaking on their mingled dust. The dew falls from heaven upon their union in the grave. Partakers in every peril, in the glory shall we not participate? And shall we be told, as a requital, that we are estranged from the noble country for whose salvation our life-blood was poured out?’

The effect of such an outburst from the lips of Shiel may be conceived; his eye kindled with fire, every feature of his

expressive countenance instinct with passion, every limb of his small but symmetrical frame trembling with emotion, his shrill but musical voice intoning every emphatic word!

Mr. Shiel from the first took up a position in which he showed that he was more intent on achieving the true interests of Ireland, than on attaining any mere Utopian realization of a fancied nationality, calculated to gratify some ideal dream of abstract rights. He was indifferent to the petty party watch-words of the moment by which the mob were to be swayed, and from the first acted with the liberal Whigs, held office under Lord John Russell, and generally declined the lead of Mr. O'Connell. From the same motives he stood aloof from the Repeal agitation, though he defended O'Connell, when on trial for conspiracy, with the ability and eloquence of his brightest days.

CHAPTER XIV.

Movements toward Parliamentary Reform—John Cartwright, the Father of Parliamentary Reform—His Account of the Trials of Hardy and Tooke—Lord Byron's Eulogium of him—His Opinions of the Slave Trade—The First English Advocate of the Ballot—His Conviction for Conspiracy—His Labours for Grecian and Mexican Independence—William Cobbett—His Character, Opinions, and Services—His Style of Writing—His Great Influence with the Middling and Lower Orders of England—Sir Francis Burdett—His Labours for Reform—His Recantation.

GRANT to the people of England equal Parliamentary representation, and all other reforms must ultimately follow. The present century has taught the masses and the statesmen of the country, that, to wield influence over its Government, it is not necessary to occupy official stations. We are about to note some occurrences in the life of one who taught and illustrated the truth, that power and place are not synonymous terms—one who exerted much sway over public affairs for fifty years, one whose services were wholly of a popular

character, he never having held office. I allude to JOHN CARTWRIGHT. His name is appropriately introduced previously to noticing the passage of the Reform Bill, for no man did more than he to create a public opinion which demanded that great measure. By universal consent he was called "THE FATHER OF PARLIAMENTARY REFORM."

Mr. Cartwright was born in 1740. He entered the navy as a midshipman, saw a great deal of hard fighting, reached the post of first lieutenant, became distinguished for his science and skill in the service, and at the age of thirty-four abandoned the sea, and turned his mind to politics. In 1774, he published *Letters on American Independence*, addressed to the House of Commons, in which he took the broadest ground in favour of the rights of the colonies. "It is a capital error," he says, "in the reasonings of most writers on this subject (the rights of man), that they consider the liberty of mankind in the same light as an estate or chattel, and go about to prove or disprove the right to it, by grants, usage, or municipal statutes. It is not among mouldy parchments that we are to look for it—it is the immediate gift of God; it is not derived from any one, but it is original in every one." Here we have the idea of the American Declaration of Independence, uttered by an unknown Englishman two years before that document was framed. In 1776, an event occurred which put Major Cartwright's principles (he had been appointed major in the Nottinghamshire militia) to a severe test. He was always proud of the navy, and ambitious of promotion in the service. Lord Howe, who had witnessed his courage and skill, having taken command of the fleet to act against the American colonies, urged Cartwright to take a captaincy of a line-of-battle ship. He was then paying his addresses to a lady of high family, whose friends would consent to her accepting his hand if he would accede to the proposal of Lord Howe. He declined, thereby losing the favour both of Mars and Hymen. This led to an acquaintance with the gallant Lord Effingham, an officer of the army, who also resigned his commission rather than act against "the rebels."

Cartwright now (1776) commenced the work to which he devoted the remaining years of his laborious and useful life—*Parliamentary Reform*. In his first two pamphlets—and they were the earliest English productions on reform in the House of Commons—he maintained that equal representation, universal suffrage, and annual elections, were rights inherent in the body of the people. His system closely resembled that engrafted upon the United States Constitution twelve years later; showing him to be a man of rare discernment for the times, and far in advance of his contemporaries. The next year he presented an address to the King, urging peace with the colonies, and a union with them on the basis of independent states. He organized, the same year, England's first association for promoting Parliamentary reform, called the “Society for Political Inquiry.” Soon after, Cartwright stood twice for Parliament, but was unsuccessful, partly on account of his radical principles, and partly because he would not stoop to any form of bribery or treating, declaring that “he would not spend a single shilling to influence the electors.”

He continued to agitate for reform, by pamphlets, speeches, and correspondence, till, in 1781, he organized the celebrated “Society for Constitutional Information,” which enrolled many of the first names in the kingdom, and to which Tocke belonged when tried for treason in 1794. Cartwright wrote the first address of the society. It received the high encomiums of Sir William Jones, who said it ought to be engraven upon gold. Parliamentary reform was now making steady progress, Cartwright being the chief pilot, when the French Revolution burst upon the world. He hailed it as the dawn of a political millennium, and, filled with joy, he addressed a congratulatory and advisory letter to the French National Assembly. But the skies of France, so bright at the rising of the revolutionary sun, soon became darkened, and the clouds poured down blood and fire upon the land, filling the friends of liberty in England with sorrow and dismay. The Reign of Terror in France was followed by a Reign of Terror in England. In the former, the victims

were royalists; in the latter, radicals. In the former, Robespierre and the guillotine executed vengeance; in the latter, the Court of King's Bench. Large numbers erased their names from the proscribed roll of the society. Cartwright, Tooke, and a resolute band, resolved to stand by their principles and pledges, and brave the royal anger, come life, come death. The particulars of the treason trials which followed have already been given.

Some of Cartwright's friends besought him to stand aloof from Tooke and his "brother traitors." He was too brave and true a man to desert his associates in the hour of trial. He addressed a letter to the Secretary of State, asking permission to visit Tooke in the Tower, avowing that it had been the greatest pleasure of his life to co-operate with him for Parliamentary Reform; and if his friend was a felon, and worthy of death, so was he. He has left interesting memoranda of the trials at the Old Bailey. He says "Gibbs spoke like an angel" in Hardy's case, and that Erskine became so exhausted toward the close of the trial, that, in arguing incidental points to the court, an intermediate person had to repeat what he said to the judges. He conveyed intelligence of the result of Hardy's case to his family in the country, in terms as terse as Caesar's celebrated military despatch: "*Hardy is acquitted.—J. C.*" He was a witness in Tooke's case. On the cross-examination by the Attorney-General, though cautioned by the court not to criminate himself, he scorned all concealment, avowing that the objects of the Constitutional Society were to obtain equal representation, universal suffrage, and annual Parliaments, and replying to the caution of the judges, that "he came there not to state what was prudent, but what was true." When questioned about some expressions of his, as to "strangling the vipers, aristocracy and monarchy," he said he had no recollection of using the terms, but if he had, and they were applied to aristocracies and monarchies hostile to liberty, he thought them well deserved. He says Tooke grappled with the prosecuting counsel with the strength and courage of a lion. When a paper was produced, and Tooke was asked to admit

his handwriting, the Chief-Judge cautioned him not to do so hastily. Turning to his lordship, he said, "I protest, before God, that I have never done an action, never written a sentence, in public or private, never entertained a thought on any political subject, which, taken fairly, with all the circumstances of time, occasion, and place, I have the smallest hesitation to admit." How the stout-hearted integrity of such men, in such a trying hour, puts to shame the servile tricks and fawning arts of office-hunting politicians!

The treason trials of 1794 being over, Cartwright resumed his work, and for eight years seems to have been almost the only active man of character and standing in the enterprise—the others having cowered before the persecuting spirit of the times. In 1802, a ludicrous occurrence showed the suspicious state of mind of the Government. The Major had a brother, Dr. George Cartwright, who was celebrated as a mechanician, being the inventor of the power-loom, and other valuable machines. He had taken out patents for them—these had been extensively infringed—and he had commenced suits against the violators. The Major was assisting him in procuring evidence; and for that purpose he had despatched an agent to Yorkshire, with a letter of instructions, which had a good deal to say about *levers, cranks, rollers, and screws*. The messenger was arrested as a joint conspirator with the Major for the overthrow of his Majesty's Government, by means of some "infernal machine"—the phrases in the letter being interpreted to cover a dark design to "put the screws" on the King. Ascertaining that his agent was in *limbo*, Cartwright wrote to the Attorney-General, offering to explain the matter. The Crown officer was not to be so enlightened. Indict and hang the conspirator he would, in spite of power-looms and militia majors. At length the facts became known, and the astute Attorney was glad to back out of the ridiculous scrape by an apologetic letter to the parties.

It would require a volume to record all that Cartwright did for Parliamentary reform from 1804, when it had a limited revival, till 1824, when he died. Though he was sixty-four

years old at the commencement of this period, and eighty-four at its close, he did more during these twenty years to procure for Englishmen their electoral rights, than any other individual in the kingdom. He published scores of pamphlets, written in a bold, lucid style, and going to the root of the controversy ; convened hundreds of meetings in all parts of the country, to which he addressed able speeches ; sent thousands of petitions to Parliament ; formed numerous societies ; and conducted a never flagging correspondence with the leading friends of liberty and reform. In 1810, he sold his farm and removed to London, that "he might be near his work." Brave old heart of oak, of threescore years and ten ! The next year, thirty-eight persons were seized at Manchester while attending a reform meeting, and sent fifty miles to prison, on a charge of sedition. Cartwright went down to aid in preparing their defence and to attend the examination. Having procured their release, he took a circuitous route home, getting up meetings and petitions on the tour. He was arrested, taken before a magistrate, his papers and person searched, when, finding nothing actionable in them, he was discharged. Vainly endeavouring to obtain a copy of the warrant on which he was arrested, he subsequently presented the case by petition to the House of Peers. Lord Byron, the poet, in supporting the petition, said of him : "He is a man, my lords, whose long life has been spent in one unceasing struggle for the liberty of the subject, against that undue influence of the Crown which has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished ; and whatever difference of opinion may exist as to his political tenets, few will be found to question the integrity of his intentions. Even now, oppressed with years, and not exempt from the infirmities attendant on age, but unimpaired in talent, and unshaken in spirit, *frangas, non flectes*, he has received many a wound in the combat against corruption ; and the new grievance, the fresh insult, of which he now complains, may inflict another sear, but no dishonour."

In 1814, he addressed a series of letters to Clarkson on the slave trade—he having taken an active part in the con-

test for its abolition—in which he argued that it should be punished as piracy, a doctrine which he was the first to broach. He also wrote against bribery at elections, and in favour of voting by ballot, being the first English advocate of that measure. A year or two after this, a mercenary widow of one of his old correspondents wrote to him that the Government had offered her a large sum if she would give up his letters—adding, significantly, that the circumstances of her family were such, that she feared she must comply with the offer. He extinguished her hopes of extorting money from him by informing her, “it gave him great satisfaction to find that any of his letters were esteemed so valuable, and begged her to make the best bargain she could of their contents.” In 1816, the great number and imposing character of the demonstrations in favour of Parliamentary reform alarmed the Government. Canning, in the House of Commons, denounced Cartwright as “that old heart in London, from which the veins of sedition in the country are supplied.” The kingdom was in a flame—the *habeas corpus* act was suspended—and the “Six Acts,” aimed at the Irish Catholic associations, and the English reform meetings, were adopted. Cobbett, the editor of the Register, fled to America. Cartwright, who never flinched from friend or foe, stood his ground, and contrived new modes to keep up the agitation, evading the recent law against “tumultuous petitioning,” by getting up *petitions of twenties*, and in various ways avoiding the prohibitions of the “Six Acts.”

So far, he had kept out of the fangs of the law, excepting in the affair of searching his person. But the Attorney-General had his eye upon him. In 1819 he participated in the famous Birmingham proceedings, which resulted in the appointment, on his suggestion, of a “Legislatorial Attorney” for the town, who was to present a letter to the Speaker of the Commons, as its representative. This measure of “sending a petition in the form of a living man, instead of one on parchment,” as he called it, precipitated the long-expected crisis. He was indicted for conspiracy and sedition, in Warwickshire. So soon as he heard of it, he set off by post to

meet the charge, travelling one hundred miles in a single day, though then bowed down with the weight of fourscore years. Putting in bail, he returned to London, and resumed his work. Soon after, he presided at a reform meeting, drew up a petition, couched in the most energetic terms, signed it, sent it to the Commons, and then set about exposing the attempts of the Crown officers to pack the jury which was to try him. The trial took place in August 1820. He called no witnesses; addressed the jury mainly in defence of his principles; was convicted; was not called up for sentence till the next May; when the judge, after eulogizing his general character, condemned him to pay a fine of £100, and stand committed till it was paid. He immediately pulled out a canvass bag, counted down the money in gold, slyly remarking to the sheriff that they were all "*good sovereigns.*"

When the heroic struggles of Greece, South America, and Mexico, resounded through Europe, they had no more attentive listener than Major Cartwright. Seizing his never-idle pen, he wrote "*Hints to the Greeks*"—a letter to the President of the Greek Congress—and another to the Greek Deputies. About the same time, he opened his doors to two of the liberal leaders in the Spanish Revolution, who had sought refuge in England. His sun was now declining. He had attended his last reform meeting in 1823; he wrote his last political pamphlet in 1824. In July of this year he received a letter from Mr. Jefferson, who said, "Your age of eighty-four, and mine of eighty-one years, insure us a speedy meeting; we may then commune at leisure on the good and evil which, in the course of our long lives, we have both witnessed." He had taken a deep interest in the Mexican struggles for liberty, and frequently conferred with General Michelena, then its envoy in London, upon its affairs. On the 21st of September 1824, the General sent to inform him that the scheme of Iturbide had failed, and that the liberty of Mexico might be considered as established. Two days afterward, "the father of Parliamentary reform" died, retaining his faculties and his fervent love of freedom to the

last. He cheerfully resigned himself into the hands of his Maker, exclaiming, “God’s will be done!”

Among the remarkable men who, like Cartwright, helped to prepare the public mind for the Reform Bill, and like him, illustrated the truth that power and place are not necessarily synonymous terms, is WILLIAM COBBETT, whom the “Corn-law Rhymer” calls England’s

“Mightiest peasant-born.”

His name is familiar on both sides of the Atlantic, and is much mixed up with good and evil report. He was no negation, but a man of mark, who left his impress on the age. He was not only one of the most voluminous, but one of the boldest and most powerful writers of the present century. Ever in the thickest of the strife, his “peasant arm” dealt goodly blows in the contests of the people with the Crown, during the last thirty years of his turbulent life. Cobbett was born in 1762. His father was a poor yeoman, who brought his son up to hard work and Tory principles. He never went to school, but was literally self-taught, learning even the alphabet without a teacher. He says:—“I learned grammar when I was a private soldier on the pay of sixpence per day.” Having committed Lowth’s Grammar to heart, he used to make it a rule to recite it through from memory every time he stood sentry. He enlisted in the army when he was twenty-one, and served eight years in the British American colonies. He was discharged, returned to England, married, made a short tour in France, whence he embarked for the United States, arriving in New York in 1792. He was a violent Tory—joined the anti-French party—commenced publishing—attacked with ferocity Priestley, Franklin, Rush, Jefferson, Dallas, Monroe, Gallatin, Fox, Sheridan, Bonaparte, Talleyrand, and a score of other great men—was compelled to give bail in a heavy sum for his good behaviour—was sued for a libel by Dr. Rush, who recovered £1200 damages—fled from Philadelphia to New York, where the execution overtook him—was thrown into prison—the penalty was paid

by his admirers—he left the country, and arrived in England in 1801. While in America, he wrote under the name of “Peter Porcupine,” and on his return to England published his writings in twelve volumes. They had a large circulation among the Anti-Jacobins, who received him with open arms. He had previously sent an account of his transatlantic “persecutions” to the “Loyal Society” of London, “to be used as a panacea for the reformists, and the whole gang of liberty-men in England.”

He started a paper in London in 1801, called “The Porcupine,” which supported Pitt and the Tories, and attacked Fox and the Whigs, much after the style of his Philadelphia writings. He suspended the publication of “The Porcupine,” and commenced his celebrated “Weekly Political Register” in 1802, which he continued till his death, a period of thirty-three years. This journal has given him an enduring name among the political writers of his times. For two or three years it advocated high Toryism. Wyndham was enamoured of it, and stated in the House of Commons that its editor deserved a statue of gold. Wyndham promised to introduce Cobbett to Pitt. The latter declined to see him. The editor was deeply mortified at this rebuff of the aristocratic minister. Immediately thereafter, and probably therefore, Cobbett changed his politics, and from a high Church and King man, turned to be a radical reformer and champion of the people. The first public demonstration of the change was a violent philippic against the Irish Tory administration. He was prosecuted for libels, both at London and Dublin, on the Lord-Lieutenant, Chancellor, Chief-Justice, and Under-Secretary for Ireland, and was fined a thousand pounds. This prosecution only stimulated his new-born zeal for liberalism. He sharpened his weapons, and plunged them into his old friends as vigorously as he had before done into those of their enemies, sparing neither Church nor State, Ministry nor King. The Register soon became the terror of political evil-doers. Its denunciations of profligate statesmen and rotten institutions were so bold and hearty, and its columns breathed such an air of defiant

independence, that it was sought for with avidity by the reformers of the middling and lower orders, and the income as well as the fame of its editor became largely increased.

But Cobbett never could sail long in smooth water. Like the petrel, he loved the storm. In 1810, he was prosecuted for a libel on the Government, contained in an article reflecting in indignant terms on the brutal flogging of a company of the local militia, under the *surveillance* of a regiment of German mercenaries. He defended himself, was convicted, and sentenced to pay a fine of £1000, be imprisoned two years, and give sureties for his good behaviour for seven years in £5000. He never forgot or forgave this injury. Two other prosecutions of editors grew out of the same transaction. They were defended by Brougham in two splendid speeches, which introduced the rising barrister to a first place among the forensic orators of the kingdom. The circulation of the Register had increased steadily from year to year; and soon after this trial, Cobbett continuing to edit it while in prison, it reached an unprecedented sale, some weeks numbering one hundred thousand copies. Its vigorous assaults on the Government conspired with the other reform movements of the times to cause the repeal of the *habeas corpus*, and the passage of the infamous "Six Acts," by which the Ministry hoped to crush the agitators. To avoid the blow aimed at him, Cobbett fled to America early in 1817, where he remained nearly three years. He regularly remitted "copy" across the Atlantic for the Register, which continued a pungent thorn in the side of Castlereagh and his friends, though the hand which wielded it was three thousand miles away.

Returning to England in 1820, he established a daily paper, which failed—tried to introduce the cultivation of Indian corn into the country, which failed—stood a candidate for Parliament for Coventry, and failed—defended himself against two prosecutions for libel, and failed, paying fines to the amount of nearly two thousand pounds—plunged into the Queen Caroline controversy with his brother liberals, and did not fail—advocated Catholic emancipation,

and saw it succeed—made an attempt to enter Parliament for Preston, and was defeated—took an active part in all the agitations for Parliamentary reform—defended himself in a speech of six hours against a prosecution for sedition, growing out of an article in the Register in favour of the Reform Bill, the jury being discharged because they could not agree—and finally was reprimanded by the Speaker, for giving three cheers in the gallery of the Commons, when the bill passed the House. In 1832, he reached the acme of his ambition, by being returned to the first reformed Parliament for the borough of Oldham. But it is a rare tree that will bear transplanting in the sear and yellow leaf of advanced age. Cobbett was threescore years and ten when he took his seat in the House of Commons. Though he made a few vigorous speeches, he did not fulfil the expectations of his friends, nor exhibit the power and originality in debate which the public anticipated from the editor of the Political Register. He closed his stormy life in 1835.

Cobbett has been called “a bold, bad man.” Bold he was; but he was not so bad as the times in which he lived, nor the evils he assailed. He was a man to be feared rather than loved—to be admired rather than trusted; and while his later advocacy of the liberal cause was productive of the best results, it is impossible to give him credit for disinterestedness, far less for anything of pure or generous patriotism. He never whined or repined—was proud, self-willed, self-reliant—knew his strength, asked no favours, and showed no quarter. His idiosyncrasies, his egotism, his self-dependence, rendered it next to impossible for anybody to work with him even to attain a common end. He had all the characteristics of a self-taught man. He was the victim of prejudice, conceit, and passion, and seemed not to advocate a cause so much from love of it, as from hatred of its opposite. He bent his great energies to tear down existing institutions, whilst he lent but feeble aid in building up others in their place. He hated all that was above him in birth and station, and his appeals usually being to the prejudices and passions of the class from which he sprang,

he wielded a vast influence over the common people of England. They were proud of his attainments, because they regarded him as one of themselves, who had risen, by his own strength, to a commanding position among the leaders of public opinion, and they witnessed with pride his ability to grapple with and hurl to the earth the champions of the privileged orders. Thus, more than any other writer, he was, for thirty years, looked up to as the representative, the oracle, of the lower classes of his countrymen. It contributed not a little to his influence, that he was a practical farmer, in a moderate way—the great sale of his writings affording him the means of gratifying his taste for agricultural pursuits. He was a fair representative of the radical reformers of our day, to whom every change is an improvement, and all that is venerable is assumed to be hollow and false; while, at the same time, even what is more lofty and generous among the new principles of his age, are too pure and high-toned to be appreciated or understood. Taking it for granted that established systems, opinions, and institutions, were necessarily wrong, he attacked everything that was old, and everybody that was popular. He avowed that he attacked Dr. Rush's system of medical practice, because it originated with a republican—he denounced Washington as a “notorious rebel and traitor”—nicknamed Franklin “Old Lightning-rod”—denounced Lafayette as “a citizen-miscreant”—and abused Jefferson as a popular democrat. This was in the days of his Toryism. But it was characteristic of his nature and mode of thought. When a radical, he showered ridicule on Shakspeare, Milton, and Scott, because all the *literati* praised them, and eulogized O'Connell, because most Englishmen anathematized him.

But the objects of his assaults were not always so undeserving of it, nor so ill-assorted. He exposed the land monopoly of England, and vindicated the rights and dignity of labour—he laid bare the corruptions and discrepancies that had crept into the Established Church, with a bold, though often a coarse and irreverent pen. He maintained the rights of Catholics and Dissenters—he denounced the game laws,

the corn laws, and the penal code; and latterly, he advocated more extreme measures, not merely radical, but revolutionary in their character. It was impossible for a man of such giant powers and rooted prejudices, who had been subjected to persecution so often in his own person, and who was always in the thickest of the fray, to speak calmly or with measured words. Consequently, his writings abound in malevolent epithets, unmitigated vituperation, and coarse ridicule of men and measures. These, however, abundant as they are, are the blemishes of his composition, not the sources of its power. His writings abound also in right good sense, cogent reasonings, and elevated appeals to justice and humanity, interspersed with racy humour, graphic descriptions, happy illustrations, and lively anecdotes. The basis of his style was the old Saxon tongue, and it was as idiomatic and lucid as that of Franklin or Paley. He wrote on numerous subjects besides politics, and his grammars especially are still highly valued. In addition to the eighty-eight volumes of the Register, and the twelve of his Peter Porcupine, he put to press nearly fifty volumes. He was kind to his family, hospitable to the poor, and had a great deal of sunshine in his soul. He will be remembered by Englishmen, when men, who affected to look down upon him with contempt, are forgotten, or are recollect ed only to be despised.

I close this notice of the great English peasant, by quoting the last stanza of a vigorous tribute to his memory, by Ebenezer Elliott, the author of "Corn Law Rhymes":—

"Dead Oak, thou liv'st. Thy smitten hands,
The thunder of thy brow,
Speak with strange tongues in many lands,
And tyrants hear thee now!"

Sir FRANCIS BURDETT has been mentioned as a friend of Parliamentary Reform. Few Englishmen did more in his earlier days for the cause than this rash advocate of liberal principles. Few titled reformers suffered more for opinion's sake than he. It was his good or bad fortune to be frequently caught in the net of legal prosecution. In 1809,

Sir Francis then being a member of Parliament, a Mr. John Gale Jones, whose name would never have got beyond his shop had it not become associated with that of Burdett, published a handbill, animadverting, in terms of clumsy abuse, upon some proceedings of the House of Commons; whereupon he was committed to Newgate. Sir Francis brought forward a motion for his liberation, based on the ground that the House had no right to imprison him for such an offence. Being defeated, he published an address to his constituents, in which he applied some contemptuous epithets to this as a contemptible proceeding. A furious debate sprang up, which terminated in a resolution to commit Burdett to the Tower. The Sergeant-at-Arms went to his house with the warrant of committal, but Sir Francis refused to accompany him to his new abode. The next day he repeated his visit; but by this time the populace had assembled in great numbers around the dwelling of the baronet, and drove away the officer. Early the following morning, he broke into his apartments, seized Burdett, put him into a carriage, and bore him to the Tower, accompanied by several regiments of dragoons, where he remained in close confinement till the end of the session. The day of his release, all London was out of doors, and he was welcomed home with shoutings, flags, and salutes of cannon. Sir Francis continued to advocate the popular cause with unflinching zeal during the next ten years, when, in 1819, a great reform meeting was held at Manchester, in the open air. All was orderly, though sufficiently excited, till a regiment of yeoman cavalry rode in upon the multitude, and, with drawn swords, cut down men, women, and children, leaving many dead and wounded on the field. Sir Francis published a bold letter to the electors of Westminster (he being the representative of that constituency), commenting in eloquent terms on this infamous transaction. He was indicted for a seditious libel; and after contesting the prosecution, inch by inch, through all the courts—not so much for his own sake as for that of the great cause with which he was identified—he was fined £2000, and imprisoned

three months. Some occurrences in his life have led candid observers to regard Sir Francis Burdett as something of a demagogue. He had a spice of that element in his composition. He was a bold, fearless man, exceedingly fond of popularity, who told plain truths in a plain way, whether addressing letters to his constituents, or speeches to the Commons House of Parliament. He often stood alone among his colleagues, assured in the conviction that, though no member voted with him, he was supported by the voices of hundreds of thousands of the people. He was a man of much varied information, an able debater, and always exerted a controlling influence over the more radical portions of the House. His frequent letters to his constituents were bold, eloquent, and pungent, occasioned him a good deal of persecution and money, and were perhaps worth all they cost. In 1818 he was chosen, with Romilly, to represent the important borough of Westminster, after one of the bitterest contests modern England has known. He retained the seat through many years. In all the onsets upon corruption and prerogative, down to the era of the Reform Bill, he was with the head of the liberal column, and stood where the blows fell thickest and heaviest, the idol of the people, the target of the Crown. He was a Wilkes, without his large measure of cowardice, meanness, turbulence, or rottenness of character and want of principle. He was, however, a man who could only have acquired the prominence he did in times of great disorder, when, in the keen struggle for popular ends, the means are not too keenly sifted, and the showy, boastful, and loud-tongued partizanship of the noisy demagogue, often obtains for him a temporary pre-eminence above abler and better men. He resented in his latter days the secondary place he was compelled to take when the noise and the vehemence of the death-struggle was past ; and after wavering for a time in his fidelity to the popular cause, he at length entirely deserted it. After the passage of the Reform Bill, he ceased to act with the leading party of reformers, and on the occasion of an attempt to deprive the Irish Church of a portion of its temporalities,

he went wholly over to the Tories, after which he sunk into comparative obscurity. Some years afterwards, in reply to a speech of Lord John Russell, he signalized his utter abandonment of the political creed of his earlier years, by speaking of “the cant of reform!” Lord John electrified the House when he retorted with cutting emphasis, that “there was such a thing as the *re-cant* of reform!”

CHAPTER XV.

Parliamentary Reform—Old House of Commons—Rotten Boroughs—Old Sarum—French Revolution of 1830—Rally for Reform—Wellington resigns—Grey in Power—Ministerial Bill Defeated—New Parliament summoned—Commons pass the Bill—Brougham's Speech in Lords—Peers throw out the Bill—Mrs. Partington—Riots—Again Bill passed by Commons, and again defeated by Peers—Ministers resign—Are recalled—The Bill becomes a Law.

THE House of Commons was instituted in the thirteenth century, when Henry III. summoned the counties of the realm to send knights, and the principal cities and boroughs to send citizens and burgesses, to Parliament. This was done rather to afford him a check upon his arrogant barons, and to procure the sanction of “*the Commons*” (as the un-titled property-holders were called), to certain subsidies, than to vest in them any independent functions. But this “third estate,” continuing to be summoned in subsequent reigns, its influence increased with the wealth and intelligence of the middle classes, whom it represented, till what was long regarded by them as a burden came to be cherished as a right and a privilege; and a supple instrument, originally used by the monarch to strengthen his prerogative, gradually became a weapon used by others to cripple its powers and limit its boundaries.

At first, all the counties, and the largest cities and boroughs, were summoned. Subsequently, as other towns

rose to importance, they were added to the list. In process of time, as trade fluctuated, drying up old channels and opening new, many of the ancient cities and boroughs fell into decay. Still they sent representatives to Parliament. In 1509, the House consisted of 298 members, many of them even then representing very small constituencies. From that period, down to the passage of the Reform Bill, no place was disfranchised (except two or three for bribery), while 255 members were added—including those from Scotland after its union with England—by the creation of new and the revival of old boroughs. During the six centuries which the House had existed, what changes had passed over the kingdom, sweeping away the foundations of once populous marts, and causing others to rise on barren wastes!

Here we have the origin of "*rotten boroughs*;" that is, towns which, centuries ago, had a flourishing existence, continuing to send representatives to Parliament long after any human being had made his local habitation therein, and whose very names would have perished from the land, but that they were annually recorded on the Parliamentary rolls. One of these has been immortalized by the discussions on the Reform Bill—Old Sarum. Not a soul had dwelt there since the Tudors ascended the English throne—not a tenement had been seen there since Columbus discovered America—nor could the vestiges of its ruins be traced even by the antiquarian eye of a Botta or a Layard. This sand-hill, in 1832, sent as many members to Parliament as did the county of Lancaster, with a population of a million and a half. Various represented boroughs were nearly in like condition; others could display their half score or more of decayed dwellings. In the case of these rotten boroughs, the owner of the land, or of the old franchises, who was generally a wealthy Peer, sometimes an aspiring London attorney, occasionally an avaricious stock-jobbing Jew, by virtue of his single vote, elected the representatives. Subject to the mutations of other real estate and franchises, they were transferable by private bargain, or auction, or sheriff's sale, or will, or assignment of a bankrupt's effects,

or as security for a gambling debt. Not only were they instruments of corruption, but ludicrous libels on the claim of the House of Commons to represent the people, and striking illustrations of extreme inequality in the distribution of political power.

An East India Prince, the Nabob of Arcot, once owned boroughs entitled to twenty members of Parliament; and through his English agent, who held the parchment titles, he sent that number to the Commons. A waiter at a celebrated gaming-house sat for years in Parliament in this wise. He lent money to a “noble” gambler, who gave him security for the loan on a rotten borough, which sent a member. The waiter elected himself to the seat. In the debates on the Reform Bill, it was stated that certain places, with an aggregate population of less than five thousand, returned one hundred members. Old Sarum, Gatton, Newtown, and other decayed boroughs, exerted a controlling influence on British legislation, long after some of them had ceased to be the abodes of man; whilst Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, and other important towns, swarming with life, and rich in arts and manufactures, had not a single representative. The elective franchise was very restricted, and generally based on absurd qualifications. Scores of members were chosen by close corporations, while others were designated by single individuals. The essence of the system is concentrated in the general fact, that, in 1832, less than two hundred persons, mostly of the “privileged orders,” already fully represented in the House of Peers, actually returned a majority of the House of Commons.

So enormous an evil was not without an occasional mite of good. Though these traffickers in Parliamentary seats usually bestowed them on favourites of their own class, there were some notable exceptions to this rule. John Horne Tooke, the most radical of all reformers, sat for Old Sarum, the rottenest of all rotten boroughs. Brougham entered the Commons through the narrow door of a “nomination borough,” though he left it with the plaudits of the largest constituency in the kingdom. Burke, Romilly,

Mackintosh, and other illustrious and liberal names, were indebted to close corporations for their introduction to senatorial fame.

This system, the slow growth of centuries, was in full force at the accession of William IV. It was destined to a speedy overthrow. Early in 1830, a simultaneous movement towards the long-deferred reform was made throughout Great Britain and Ireland. George IV. died, and William IV. ascended the throne, on the 26th of June 1830. In the following month, the people of France rose and drove the Bourbons from their kingdom. The news descended upon the already excited mind of England like an animating spirit. The mass heaved with the throes of new life. The reformers held meetings in every important town, to congratulate their brethren of France on the expulsion of the elder Bourbons. Drawn together by the bonds of a common sympathy, they realized how numerous and powerful a body they were. The election for a new Parliament occurred in September. Liberal candidates sailed with the popular current. The result showed a great diminution of the supporters of Wellington and Peel. Parliament met in November. The cry of "Reform!" was ringing from the "unions" and "associations," which the last four months had seen established in every considerable town and village in the country. The king's speech made no allusion to the subject that absorbed all minds. In the exciting debate on the address to the Throne, Earl Grey came out boldly for a reform in Parliament. Wellington, in reply, assumed the most hostile ground, declaring that "so long as he held any station in the Government, he should resist to the utmost any such measure." The announcement that Ministers were determined to cling to a system whose rotting props had been for years falling away, astonished and inflamed the Opposition. Fifteen days afterwards, Ministers were placed in a minority in the Lower House, on a financial question. The next day, the Iron Duke in the Peers, and Peel in the Commons, announced that they had relinquished the helm of affairs!

The Duke of Wellington resigned on the 16th of November 1830. The King immediately authorized Lord Grey to form an administration, upon the basis of Parliamentary reform—the first liberal ministry which had existed, with the exception of a few turbulent months, for sixty-five years! Lords Grey, Durham, John Russell, Althorp, Lansdowne, Holland, and Mr. Brougham, were its leading spirits; its subordinates being made up of the Melbournes, the Palmerstons, and other converted Canningites. Parliament adjourned till February, to afford the new Cabinet time to perfect its plan. While Downing Street was anxiously cogitating the details of the great measure, its friends stimulated public sentiment in every part of the empire. On the 1st of March 1831, Lord John Russell brought forward, in the House of Commons, the ministerial plan for a reform in Parliament. A summary of its leading provisions, as finally adopted, is subjoined.

It was a compromise between representation and prescription, on the three principles of disfranchisement, enfranchisement, and extension of the suffrage. The number of members, 658, was not altered, but their distribution was changed. The ultra rotten borough system was exploded. In England, 56 boroughs were wholly disfranchised, 31 others partially, whilst 41 new towns were enfranchised, part receiving two members, others one. The large cities and counties received an increase of members. The same principles were less extensively applied both to Scotland and Ireland.

The qualifications of electors were essentially modified, and the aggregate more than doubled. Property, in most cases, still continued to be the basis of the right of suffrage. The greatest change was in the cities and boroughs. In those, throughout the United Kingdom, the occupier of a building of the yearly value of £10, whether he owned or rented it, could vote for the local members. The ancient rights of voters, in boroughs not disfranchised, were partially preserved, but provision was made for their gradual extinction. It was supposed that the bill added more than half a million

to the number of Parliamentary electors. In 1838, the number of electors registered was 978,816. It has since exceeded a million.

The sweeping character of the bill surpassed public expectation, and produced an electric effect upon the country; the reformers hailing it with enthusiasm, whilst the champions of old abuses were stricken with horror. Mr. Hume, for the radical financiers, declared that "it far exceeded his highest hopes." Sir Charles Wetherell, the oracle of the legal formalists, denounced it as "a corporation robbery." Mr. Macaulay, the organ of the philosophic reformers, pronounced it "a great, noble, and comprehensive plan." Sir R. H. Inglis, the representative of Oxford University, denounced "the plan of Ministers as one that meant revolution, not reformation."

All parties girded themselves for such a conflict as England had not witnessed for a century. After an inveterate contest of three weeks' duration, the English bill (one for each kingdom was introduced) passed its second reading in the House by a majority of only one. A day or two afterwards, an amendment was carried against Ministers by a majority of eight. Immediately, thereupon Ministers announced that they should dissolve Parliament, and appeal to the people. At this suggestion, the Opposition broke through all restraint, and denounced them as revolutionists and traitors. They dreaded the appeal, for they knew the country was with the Ministry. The Tory Peers resolved on the desperate measure of preventing the dissolution, by arresting the reading of the King's speech. The day came, and brought with it a scene of uproar in both Houses which baffles description. A cotemporary writer says:—

"A hope had remained, that the project of stopping the King's speech, and interposing an address, might succeed. That hope rested entirely upon the speech being read by the Chancellor (Brougham), and not by the King in person. Suddenly the thunder of the guns was heard to roar, breaking the silence of the anxious crowds without, and drowning even the noise that filled the walls of Parliament. In

the fulness of his royal state, and attended by all his magnificent Court, the monarch approached the House of Lords. Preceded by the great officers of State and of the household, he moved through the vast halls, which were filled with troops in iron mail, as the outside courts were with horse, while the guns boomed, and martial music filled the air. Having stopped in the robing-chamber in order to put on his crown, he entered the House and ascended the throne, while his officers and ministers crowded around him. As soon as he was seated, he ordered the Usher of the Black Rod to summon the Commons; and his Majesty, after passing some bills, addressed them. By those who were present, the effect will not soon be forgotten of the first words he pronounced, or the firmness with which they were uttered, when he said that ‘he had come to meet his Parliament in order to prorogue it, with a view to its immediate dissolution, for the purpose of ascertaining the sense of his people in regard to such changes in the representation as circumstances might appear to require.’ He then, with an audible voice, commanded the Lord Chancellor to prorogue; which being done, the Houses dispersed, and the royal procession returned amidst the hearty and enthusiastic shouts of thousands of the people.”

Great praise is due to the King for the firmness with which he stood by his reform Ministers in this crisis, despite the clamours of alarmists in Church and State.

At the elections, the friends of the bill had the country in their hands. They carried nearly all the counties, and all the cities and large towns. Its opponents obtained their recruits chiefly from close corporations and rotten boroughs. The English bill was proposed in the new House on the 24th of June, and, after a running fight of three months, passed the Commons by 109 majority, and was sent to the Lords. The greatest anxiety was felt for its fate in that stronghold of ancient conservatism. The debate on the second reading continued four nights. On the last evening, October 7th, Lord Brougham spoke five hours in its support, making one of the greatest efforts of his remark-

able life. His speech was an era in the history of that House.

He replied *seriatim* to the opponents of the measure, while bringing to the defence and elucidation of the bill those rich stores of learning, argument, eloquence, wit, sarcasm, denunciation, and appeal, which have given him an undying name. The boldness of his doctrines, and the coolness with which he demolished "illustrious dukes," or tore the drapery from "noble lords," were no less remarkable features of this speech, considering the place where it was delivered, than its transcendent ability. Lord Dudley, probably one of the first scholars, and the most polished orator in the House, had sneered at "the statesmen of Birmingham, and the philosophers of Manchester." Brougham repelled the sneer, and, in a passage of keen severity, contrasted Lord Dudley's accomplishments with the practical sense of the men he had traduced, closing it by saying: "To affirm that I could ever dream of putting the noble earl's opinions, ay, or his knowledge, in any comparison with the bold, rational, judicious, reflecting, natural, and, because natural, the trustworthy opinions of those honest men, who always give their strong sense fair play, having no affectations to warp their judgment—to dream of any such comparison as this, would be, on my part, a flattery far too gross for any courtesy, or a blindness which no habits of friendship could excuse."

He brought his great speech to a close, by uttering this solemn warning:—

"My Lords, I do not disguise the intense solicitude I feel for the event of this debate, because I know full well that the peace of the country is involved in the issue. I cannot look without dismay at the rejection of this measure. But grievous as may be the consequences of a temporary defeat—temporary it can only be—its ultimate and even speedy success is certain. Nothing now can stop it. Do not suffer yourselves to be persuaded that, even if the present Ministers were driven from the helm, any one could steer you through the troubles which surround you, without reform. But our

successors would take up the task in circumstances far less auspicious. Under them you would be fain to grant a bill, compared with which the one we now proffer you is moderate indeed. Hear the parable of the Sybil; for it conveys a wise and wholesome moral. She now appears at your gate, and offers you mildly the volumes, the precious volumes, of wisdom and peace. The price she asks is reasonable; to restore the franchise which, without any bargain, you ought voluntarily to give. You refuse her terms, her moderate terms. She darkens the porch no longer. But soon, for you cannot do without her wares, you call her back. Again she comes, but with diminished treasures. The leaves of the book are in part torn away by lawless hands; in part defaced with characters of blood. But the prophetic maid has risen in her demands—it is Parliaments by the Year—it is Vote by the Ballot—it is Suffrage by the Million! From this you turn away indignant, and for a second time she departs. Beware of her third coming; for the treasure you must have, and what price she may next demand, who shall tell? It may even be the mace which rests upon that woolsack. What may follow your course of obstinacy, if persisted in, I cannot take upon me to predict, nor do I wish to conjecture. But this I well know—that, as sure as man is mortal, and to err is human, justice deferred enhances the price at which you must purchase safety and peace; nor can you expect to gather in another crop than they did who went before you, if you persevere in their utterly abominable husbandry, of sowing injustice and reaping rebellion. . . . You are the highest judicature in the realm. It is a judge's first duty never to pronounce sentence, in the most trifling case, without hearing. Will you make this the exception? Are you really prepared to determine, but not to hear, the mighty cause upon which a nation's hopes and fears hang? You are! Then beware of your decision! Rouse not a peace-loving but resolute people. Alienate not from your body the affections of a whole empire. I counsel you to assist with your uttermost efforts in preserving peace, and upholding and perpetuating the Constitution.

Therefore I pray and exhort you not to reject this measure. By all you hold dear—by all the ties that bind every one of us to our common order and our common country, I solemnly adjure you, I warn you, I implore you, yea, on my bended knees, I supplicate you, reject not this bill!"

The warning and the appeal were in vain. The bill was thrown out on the second reading by a majority of 41. The struggle for the mastery between the people and the nobility had now come. The Commons adopted a strong vote of confidence in Ministers, and Ministers resolved to stand by the bill. Parliament was prorogued till December. In the vacation, reform meetings assembled in unprecedented numbers. On one of these occasions at Taunton, Sydney Smith first brought to notice a venerable matron whose name is likely to be immortal in both hemispheres. In the course of his speech, the witty divine said:—

"I do not mean to be disrespectful, but the attempt of the Lords to stop the progress of reform reminds me very forcibly of the great storm at Sidmouth, and of the conduct of the excellent Mrs. Partington on the occasion. In the winter of 1824, there set in a great flood upon that town—the tide rose to an incredible height—the waves rushed in upon the houses, and everything was threatened with destruction. In the midst of this sublime and terrible storm, Dame Partington, who lived upon the beach, was seen at the door of her house with mop and pattens, trundling her mop, and squeezing out the sea-water, and vigorously pushing away the Atlantic Ocean. The Atlantic was roused—Mrs. Partington's spirit was up; but I need not tell you that the contest was unequal: the Atlantic beat Mrs. Partington. She was excellent at a slop or a puddle, but she should not have meddled with a tempest. Gentlemen, be at your ease—be quiet and steady. You will beat Mrs. Partington!"

A few riots gave diversity to the scene. At Derby, the mob demolished the property of some anti-reformers—they terribly frightened Sir Charles Wetherell at Bristol—they burnt the Duke of Newcastle's turreted seat at Nottingham

—they smashed the windows of Apsley House, the town residence of the Duke of Wellington. The country was profoundly agitated, but the firmness of Ministers averted a revolution.

Parliament met in December. The King's speech urged reform. Lord John introduced the English bill, slightly improved. A factious opposition, and an adjournment for the holidays, kept it suspended till the 22d of March 1832, when it passed the Commons, and was sent to the Lords. After a hot debate, it passed the second reading, when a hostile amendment, which destroyed its utility, was brought forward and adopted on the 7th of May. The next day, Lord Grey asked, according to a previous understanding, for the creation of a sufficient number of peers to carry the bill. The King declined—Ministers instantly resigned. The Commons addressed the King in behalf of Ministers with rare boldness. The people assembled *en masse*, and petitioned the Commons to stop the supplies. Many meetings resolved to pay no more taxes till the bill became a law. The King requested Wellington to form a compromise administration. At this proposal, the popular indignation was kindled afresh. Things were approaching a fearful crisis. The Duke tried to execute the royal wish—the ultras of both parties were not invited to seats in the Cabinet—the half-and-half reformers would not come through fear—and he gave up the task in despair. The King recalled Grey, with a pledge to create new peers, if necessary. This brought the refractory Lords to terms. Dreading the introduction of so large a body of liberals into their ancient hall, whose votes would avail the reformers in future contests, a sufficient number of the extreme Tories absented themselves from the Peers to insure the passage of the bill. Those who remained concentrated, in their dying denunciations, the venom of the entire Opposition. The English bill received the royal assent on the 7th of June 1832. The Scotch and Irish bills speedily followed, and the month of July, after a two years' contest, which had shaken the empire to its centre, saw the new constitution of the House of Commons established, and

the Reform Bill become the law of the land—forming the largest concession to the popular demands, and the greatest tribute to the democratic principle, which, from the old times of the Saxon Witenagemot, had formed one of the most essential elements in the British Constitution that the nation had witnessed since the era of the Commonwealth.

CHAPTER XVI.

Henry Lord Brougham—his Life, Services, and Character.

IN connection with the passing of the Reform Bill, it is proper to notice one of the foremost Englishmen of this century—HENRY BROUHAM. Nothing strikes one more forcibly, in the life of this extraordinary person, than the number and variety of the subjects upon which he has exerted his powers. His published speeches and writings on any one of the political measures he has advocated, if viewed merely as intellectual efforts, might satisfy the ambition of an honourable aspirant after forensic or literary fame. The aggregate constitutes hardly a tithe of his achievements in the various departments of public affairs. From his entrance into the House of Commons down to the present time, his name glows on every page of England's Parliamentary history, and posterity will permit but few of the myriad rays that encircle it to be effaced or obscured. As an advocate and a jurist, many of his speeches at the bar, and opinions on the bench, will live long after the law of libel and the Court of Chancery cease to oppress and vex mankind. His services in the cause of popular education, whether we regard the time expended, the ability displayed, or the results attained, surpass the labours of many persons who have been assigned a foremost place among the eminent benefactors of their age. His contributions to the Edinburgh

Review, covering its whole existence, and embracing a large circle of literary, scientific, political, social, legal, and historical subjects, would class him among the highest rank of periodical essayists. His more formal works, as the Sketches of Eminent Statesmen, History of the French Revolution, Lives of Men of Letters and Science, Discourse on Natural Theology, and his Political Philosophy, composed amidst the cares of public official station, would of themselves suffice to give him an enduring name in the republic of letters.

Great as are his mental achievements, it is as the early advocate of social progress and political reform—the champion of liberty and peace—the friend of man—that he is worthy of all his contemporaneous fame, and all the applause which coming generations will bestow on his memory. Inconsistency, the common infirmity of mortals, has chequered his course—eccentricity, “the twin-brother of genius,” has been at times his companion—independence, whose adjacent province is obstinacy, he has largely exhibited; but while the history of England during the first third of the nineteenth century remains, it will display to the impartial eye few names to excite more grateful admiration in every lover of his race than that which, from the abolition of the slave trade in 1806, to the abolition of slavery in 1834, was synonymous with intelligent progress and useful reform.

Brougham was born at Edinburgh, about the year 1779, and received his education in the High School and University of his native city. We first hear of him when twenty years old, while still residing in Edinburgh, communicating some papers on geometry to the Royal Society of London, which were highly applauded, and translated into foreign tongues. In 1808, he appeared as counsel at the bar of Parliament, in behalf of the commercial and manufacturing interests, against the celebrated *Orders in Council*, which followed the Berlin decree of Napoleon, and preceded the American embargo. His examination of witnesses, extending through several weeks, and his closing argument, gave him a high reputation in England, and a name both in Europe and the United States. In 1809-10, he entered Par-

liament, where, for forty years, he has displayed his extraordinary gifts. His first published speech in the House of Commons, delivered in 1810, was a powerful appeal in favour of addressing the Throne for more effectual measures to suppress the slave-trade. His next great effort was in 1812, when, assisted by Mr. Baring (Lord Ashburton), he examined witnesses for several weeks before the House of Commons, to prove that the still unrescinded Orders were ruining the trade and manufactures of the country, and provoking a war with the United States. At the close, he supported an address to the Throne for their repeal, in a speech replete with information, ably defending the policy of unrestricted commerce, and eloquently vindicating the superiority of the arts of peace over the glories of war. The motion prevailed, but too late to avert hostilities. Congress declared war the very day the speech was delivered.

His services in the cause of the people from this time downward have been referred to in these chapters, as various subjects have passed under consideration. During the long and almost hopeless struggle of Liberty with Power, from 1810 to 1830, when he was removed from the theatre of his greatest fame, he led the forlorn hope in the House of Commons. Fox, whom he greatly admired, did for a moment retire from the field in disgust and despair, but he was ever at his post, stimulating the drooping spirits of his friends, hurling defiance at his foes, and rising from every defeat with renewed courage and strength. Though classed among the heads of the Opposition in the House, he never was, he never would be, in the strict sense, a party "leader." Nor, on the contrary, did he surround himself with a "clique" or "interest," whose oracle he was. Supporting the measures of the Whigs, he had been more frequently in advance of them, cheering on the masses as the tribune of the people, and fighting the partisan battles of Reform as the guerilla chief of Liberty.

In an evil hour, he was transplanted from the scene of his greatest achievements to the House of Peers. Though surrounded by uncongenial spirits, and oppressed by the

decorous formalities of a body too apt to resent his fervent and impassioned outbursts as the expressions of mere democratic violence, he has retained much of his original fire, and the services of his later years will find a fitter acknowledgment than they have yet done when they can no longer delight his ear with the award of justice and the voice of praise. Those who have too often spoken of his advancement to the peerage as a desertion of the people, will then remember that some of his mightiest efforts in the good cause were put forth after he entered the Upper House of Parliament.

Had Brougham coveted and obtained “leadership” in its party sense, in either House, he must have failed. Too original, independent, wayward, and dogmatical, to be implicitly trusted and obeyed by his equals; too incautious and pushing; too impatient of dulness; too much of a genius, to be always appreciated and confided in by practical men, though he would have been applauded by the masses—his premiership, had he been so distinguished by royal favour, could not have long survived the passage of the Reform Bill. With the exception of taking the great seal, he has chosen to be what he is—an original and wayward genius, a rare comet, created to move in no orbit but its own—beautiful and lustrous in the distance, but grand and terrible in proximity.

The public measures with which he is most closely identified are—the advocacy of the manufacturing and commercial interests, as opposed to orders in council and other restrictions on trade; hostility to the continental combinations of the successors of Pitt, and their legitimate offspring, exhausting wars and the Holy Alliance; the vindication of Queen Caroline, in her struggle against one who had forfeited all right even to inquire into the truth of the charges brought against her; the freedom of the press, attempted to be overawed by prosecutions for libels on the government and the church; the education of the middle and lower orders; religious toleration for Dissenters and Roman Catholics; reform in the civil and criminal law; Parlia-

tary reform; municipal reform; poor laws reform; the abolition of the slave trade and slavery; retrenchment in government expenditures; the independence of the Canadian Legislature; and the repeal of the corn laws. What a catalogue have we here! Upon all these measures, each of which was an era in British history, Brougham has acted a leading, and upon many, a controlling part. His speeches upon most of them surpassed those of any other of their advocates, whether we consider the extent of the information displayed, the depth and energy of the reasoning, the scope and vigour of the style, the eloquence of the appeals to justice and humanity, or the majesty and splendour of the higher passages.

Lord Brougham's fame as an orator has filled two hemispheres. We will look at him in the two aspects of matter and manner.

The four volumes of his speeches, with others gleaned from the Parliamentary reports, prove that his reputation is well founded. Their leading characteristic is power-crushing power—as distinguished from beauty and grace. They are not so gorgeous as Burke's, nor so compact as those of the great American orator, Webster. But they contain more information and argument, and less philosophy and fancy, than those of the former—more versatility and vigour, and less formal and studied method, than those of the latter. As *speeches*, rather than *orations*, addressed to a deliberative body of friends and foes, and designed to influence those who are to *act* upon the subject under discussion, they are more practical and to the matter in hand than Burke's; more hearty and soul-stirring than Webster's. Their style is a mixture of Burke and Webster—less extravagant anywhere than some passages of the former; frequently more slovenly than any passage of the latter; with more of bitter personal taunt and lofty rebuke of fraud, meanness, and oppression, than either. Viewed as literary productions, regardless of the immediate fruits they produced, they will hardly perhaps stand the test of posthumous fame like Burke's. Less universal in their application,

less penetrated with principles adapted alike to all times, they often betray the advocate instead of the statesman, the partisan rather than the philosopher, the leader and champion of contemporaries rather than the instructor and mentor of posterity. But it still remains a question, whether they were not the more valuable on that very account. Their immediate effect in moving masses of men, and moulding public measures, far surpassed that of Burke's. And though the *words* of the latter may outlive those of the former, the deeds accomplished by Lord Brougham are stamped indelibly on the annals of his country, and will shine out with undying lustre on some of the brightest pages of its history.

Lord Brougham's speeches deal little in mere declamation, even of the highest order, but are pregnant with apposite facts and arguments, giving the reader or hearer an unusual amount of information upon the matters under discussion. He excels, when he tries, in a plain lucid statement of his subject; as witness his speech on law reform in 1828, when, for seven hours, he held the close attention of the unprofessional House of Commons, while he sketched the absurdities and abuses of every branch of the common law, and detailed the amendments he proposed in its principles and administration. But this is not his *forte*, and for that very reason his dexterity and self-control excite our admiration the more. If you would see him in his greatest moods, you must give him a person or a party to attack, which shall arouse his combative propensities, and bring his invective and sarcasm into full play; or some giant abuse to anathematize and demolish, which shall inflame his indignation and abhorrence.

We gather from his own statements that the garb and colours in which he attires the main body of a speech—the mere style and diction—are the impulse of the occasion; as most of the sarcasms and rebukes are flung out in the heat of delivery. But, where time for preparation is afforded, no speaker is more careful in arranging the general drift of the argument, and digesting the facts to illustrate and sus-

tain it; whilst certain passages, such as the exordium or peroration, are the result of the most painstaking labours of the closet. He has recorded that the peroration of his speech in the Queen's case was written no less than ten times before he thought it fit for so august an occasion. The same is probably true of similar passages in Webster's speeches; it is known to be so of Burke's.

No orator of our times is more successful in embalming phrases, full of meaning, in the popular memory. The well-known talismanic sentiment, "*The schoolmaster is abroad*," is an instance. In a speech on the elevation of Wellington, a "military chieftain," to the premiership, after the death of Canning, Brougham said: "Field-Marshal the Duke of Wellington may take the army—he may take the navy—he may take the great seal—he may take the mitre. I make him a present of them all. Let him come on with his whole force, sword in hand, against the Constitution, and the English people will not only beat him back, but laugh at his assaults. In other times, the country may have heard with dismay that 'the soldier was abroad.' It will not be so now. Let the soldier be abroad if he will; he can do nothing in this age. There is another personage abroad—a personage less imposing—in the eyes of some, perhaps insignificant. *The schoolmaster is abroad*; and I trust to him, armed with his primer, against the soldier in full military array."

Turning from the matter to the manner of the orator, Brougham stood unrivalled as a debater in the House of Commons. For twenty years he swayed the intellect and passions of the House, by his bold and nervous eloquence, whilst Castlereagh, Canning, and Peel controlled its majorities and dictated its measures, by the wave of their official wand. Castlereagh was more self-possessed and matter-of-fact than he; Canning more brilliant and classical; Peel more dexterous and plausible. But in weight of metal he surpassed them all. His oratory was not the brawl and foam of a dashing mountain torrent, but the steady roar of the deep, broad cataract. In ability to inflame friends and foes, and shake the House till it quaked, he equalled either

Chatham or Fox. When thoroughly roused, with all his powers in full play, he held the passions of a hostile auditory enchain'd within his grasp, and made the objects of his indignant sarcasm and bold rebukes cower and tremble, as beneath the rod of a master.

Chatham introduced the style of the House of Commons into the debates of the House of Lords. Brougham's appearance there constituted almost as new an era in its oratory as the advent of Chatham. It was my good fortune to hear him two or three times in the Lords, several years ago—once when his best powers were put in action for a brief hour.

We entered the House of Peers. Brougham, Grey, Wellington, Lyndhurst, Melbourne—were in their places. An exciting debate was going forward, which had taken rather a personal turn. Yonder is Brougham, stretched out half his length on one of the Ministerial benches ; now listening to an Earl on the floor, whom he eyes with a portentous scowl ; anon whispering a hurried word to the Peer at his elbow. What an ungainly figure ! Those long legs and arms, loosely hung, give him a slouching air. His iron-gray hair bristles over his forehead like the quills of the fretful porcupine. His restless eye peers through eyebrows that seem alive with nerves. He must be agitated with the debate, for he writhes as though his red cushion were a sheet of hot iron. He suddenly starts up, (who ever knew him to sit still five minutes?) walks with long strides towards the door, and while chatting with the ladies, his tormentor stops, and the ex-Chancellor cries, with startling emphasis (lest some one get the floor before him), "My Lords !" and slowly advances to the table in front of the woolsack. An audible *hush* runs round the chamber ; for they had been anticipating his reply. Every whisper ceases, and all eyes are fixed on the speaker before them. The Peeresses leave their chairs, and approach the bar, to get a better view of the orator. Members of the House of Commons, till now chatting round the bar, lean forward in silence. The loungers in the lobbies enter the Hall, the word having

passed out, “Brougham is up!” The spectators rise from their seats on the carpet, where fatigue had sunk them, and stand on tiptoe, to catch every glance of the eye and wave of the hand of the scholar and statesman, whilst the crowded galleries forget their lassitude in listening to one whose name and fame are the property of mankind.

But to the speech. Listen to that first sentence! How it plunges into the very centre of the subject. Every word is an argument—every period a demonstration. The first blow knocks the keystone from his last antagonist’s speech, and tumbles the whole structure on his affrighted head. And the young Lord over in the corner, who, in the puny oration he recited so prettily an hour ago, went out of his way to sneer at Brougham, feels the blood fly from his checks when his nice little piece of rhetoric comes rattling in bits about his ears. A fiery glance or two having withered him, the monarch of the debate grapples with worthier antagonists. What a sweep does he give to the argument—what redundancy of facts—what fertility of illustration! How large the field of his comprehension—how exhaustless and varied its resources! What execution is done by those long-drawn sentences, with parenthesis within parenthesis, each a logical syllogism, or a home-thrust fact, or a blighting sarcasm, wound round and round his victims, till they are crushed in their folds! Great in matter, his speech is equally powerful in manner; violating every law of rhetoric and oratory promulgated by the schools, he is a law unto himself—original, commanding, majestic.

Brougham, having demolished his antagonists, took a seat at the clerk’s table, and began to write a letter, when the Chancellor (Cottenham) rose and commenced a conciliatory speech. His calm, slow, cool manner contrasted strongly with the tempest which had just passed over our heads, reminding us of those dewy showers which follow smilingly in the trail of a dark cloud, after its thunder and torrents have given place to a serener aspect and milder skies.

Lord Brougham has been described so often, that not only

his public history and mental character, but his personal peculiarities—even the nervous twitching of his eyebrows,—are familiar to all. I have spoken of the versatility of his talents and acquirements. Its recognition may be traced even in the sneer of an opponent. Sir E. B. Sugden was arguing a cause before him in Chancery. The Chancellor was not very attentive to the argument, employing part of the time in writing letters. This greatly piqued Sugden; and on retiring from the court he dryly said to a friend, "If Brougham only knew a little of Chancery law, he would know a little of everything." Undoubtedly he knows something about everything, and much about most things. He has been compared to a Scotch Encyclopedia, without alphabetical arrangement. If he has not reached the highest place in any department of knowledge, it is because, in traversing so vast a field, he must here and there be necessarily only a gleaner. His success in so many departments proves that had he cultivated but one or two, he might have surpassed all cotemporary competition. Looking to the variety and extent of his acquisitions and labours, posterity will regard him as one of the most extraordinary men of his time. He reached his eminent position by no royal road. He has been among the most laborious and diligent of men. Well-known facts attest his wonderful activity.

His able work, "Practical Observations upon the Education of the People," published in 1825, was composed, he says, during hours stolen from sleep. Combe states of him, that he was once engaged in a court of law all day, from which he went to the House of Commons, and mingled in the debate till two o'clock in the morning. He then retired to his house, and wrote upon an article for the Edinburgh Review till it was time to go to the court, where he was actively employed till the hour for the assembling of the Commons; thither he went, and participated in the discussion as vigorously as usual till long after midnight—taking no rest till the morning of the third day! The witty Hazlitt, alluding, at the time, to his speeches on commercial and

manufacturing distress, said, “He is apprized of the exact state of our exports and imports, and scarce a ship clears out its cargo from Liverpool or Hull, but he has a copy of the bill of lading.” It will be remembered, that while performing his political and miscellaneous labours, he was surrounded by a large circle of professional clients. His inaugural discourse, as Lord Rector of the University of Glasgow, thickly strown with Greek and Latin quotations, was, as the preface informs us, written during the business of the Northern Circuit. Sidney Smith says, in one of his graphic Reform speeches, “See the gigantic Brougham, sworn in at twelve o’clock as Chancellor, and before six he has a bill on the table abolishing the abuses of a Court which has been the curse of the people of England for centuries.”

A full share of the preparation and defence of the measures of Earl Grey’s Administration devolved on him ; while at the same time he did the work of an ordinary man in writing articles for the Penny Magazine, and scientific tracts for the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, lecturing to Mechanics’ Institutes, and contributing essays to the Edinburgh Review. During one of the busiest periods of his official life, a fatal accident happened to some labourers in excavating a deep well. Forthwith, out came a tract from the Lord Chancellor, on the best and safest mode of digging wells ! Though his numerous publications and addresses on learned subjects, and his participation in the proceedings of the Royal Society and French Institute showed their author to be a scientific man, his Lives of Men of Letters and Science exhibited an acquaintance with the sciences in his old age, for which his friends were hardly prepared.

The great political crisis of his life was his acceptance of the Chancellorship, and consequent removal from the House of Commons. It may be remarked, in passing, that it is a mistake to suppose he diminished his reputation as a lawyer by his judicial administration. He was never a first-rate technical lawyer. His mind was too broad, his ambition too

high, to be a *mere* lawyer, tied down with red tape to *nisi prius* precedents and the *dicta* of cases. The profession to him was not an end, as it was to Scarlett and his school, but a subsidiary means to attain political eminence and influence. A great cause, like that of Queen Caroline, or of Williams, indicted for a libel on the Durham clergy, showed what he could accomplish when he bent his powers to professional work. His speeches on law reform prove his minute acquaintance with, and utter contempt for the great body of the common law, as administered by the courts; and when presiding in a tribunal whose currents had been brought to a dead stand by the “everlasting doubts” of Lord Eldon, the best service he could render suitors and the country, was to clear out the channels, and set the streams flowing, even though he might make mistakes in acting on the expedient maxim, that “it is better to have a case decided wrong, than not at all.”

He was not insensible to the consequences of his removal to the Upper House. Speaking of Chatham’s removal, he says, “No one ever did it voluntarily without bitterly rueing the step, when he found the price paid to be the loss of all real power.” Grey first offered him the gown of Attorney-General. Feeling it to be beneath his position in the Reform party, he contemptuously rejected it. The great seal was then placed in his hand. He should rather have taken the pen of one of the Secretaries of State, and remained in the “Commons.” By superiority of intellect, or his “managing” or “pushing” propensity, the chief defence of the Ministry in the Peers devolved on him instead of the Premier. He was in a trying position. His native element was opposition. He was unequalled at tearing down—he had no skill for building up. The Reformers expected much from the new Administration, and everything from Brougham. All went smoothly till the Reform Bill passed. Large quantities of ripe fruit were expected thereupon to be immediately gathered. Sydney Smith foreshadowed this, in his droll way. In a speech during the struggle, he said, “All young ladies will imagine, as soon as this bill is carried, that they

will be instantly married. Schoolboys believe that gerunds and supines will be abolished, and that currant tarts must ultimately come down in price ; the corporal and sergeant are sure of double pay ; bad poets will expect a demand for their epics ; fools will be disappointed, as they always are ; reasonable men, who know what to expect, will find that a very serious good has been obtained.” The result has sufficiently confirmed the truth that reasonable and wise men are greatly outnumbered by the fools.

Much was done for reform by the Grey Ministry, after the passage of the bill. In less than two years, West India slavery was abolished—the East India Company’s monopoly destroyed—the poor laws amended—the criminal code softened—the administration of the Courts essentially improved—the Scotch municipal corporations totally reformed—and many abuses corrected in the Irish Church Establishment. But young ladies, bad poets, and foolish people of all sorts, clamoured for more ; and many reasonable men were disappointed. The dead weights on progress were the Melbournes, the Palmerstons, the Grants, who, having opposed reform all their days, were converted at the eleventh hour of the recent struggle, and brought into the Cabinet. The damaging measure of the Administration was an attempt to suppress agitation in Ireland by a coercion bill, which excited a quarrel with O’Connell, and divisions in the Cabinet, and finally led to the resignation of Grey. Glad to escape from an uneasy position, Brougham soon followed. He could not have got rid of his title, like Mirabeau, had he sought it, by opening a shop, and getting back to the Commons ! But it stuck to him like the tunic of Nessus. Though consigned to perpetual membership in a body which the original constitution of his mind was little in harmony with, and all the habits of his earlier life were opposed to, as a member of the House of Peers, he has now and then shown himself “Harry Brougham” still. His speeches in the Lords on Parliamentary, legal, municipal, and poor laws reform ; on popular education ; abolishing subscription in the universities ; retrenchment ; abolition of negro apprenticeship, and the

African and Eastern slave trade ; Canadian independence ; repeal of the corn laws ; and other topics, exhibit no abatement of intellectual power, or, so far as concerns those subjects, of regard for popular rights and social improvement. Indeed, some of them rank among his greatest and best forensic displays. The speech on the education of the people in 1835, contains as much valuable information, and that on negro apprenticeship in 1838 as many eloquent passages, as any he ever delivered.

The conflict with Melbourne in 1837-8, which threw him out of Court and Whig favour, was a matter of course, if not premeditated. In a speech at Liverpool, just after his resignation in 1835, he declared that "his position of absolute political independence" would not be abandoned to join or sustain any Ministry that did not stand by the people, and go for large measures of reform. In 1837-8, on the Canada question, he first assailed the Melbourne Cabinet ; he being for restoring peace to the colony by granting the petition of its Legislature for an elective council. His defence of the Canadian reformers was generous, bold, and eloquent ; worthy of the times when the young Commoner shook the Tory chiefs from the point of his lance, and fulminated thunders at the crowned despots of the Holy Alliance. Pointing his finger at the Premier, Melbourne, he said, "Do the Ministers desire to know what will restore me to their support, and make me once more fight zealously in their ranks, as I once fought with them against the majority of your lordships ? I will tell them here ! Let them retract their declaration against reform, delivered the first night of this session ; and their second declaration, by which, to use the noble Viscount's phrase, they *exacerbated* the first ; or let them, without any retraction, only bring forward liberal and constitutional measures, and they will have no more zealous supporter than myself. But, in the meantime, I now hurl my defiance at their heads !"

It is not to be denied that the charge has been brought against him, not always without some apparent truth, that his line of action has been caused by chagrin at being left

out of the Melbourne Ministry, and that some of his denunciations of that Administration for faltering in the work of reform, were dictated by mortified pride and thwarted ambition. For five or six years subsequent to 1835, he frequently attacked men and principles which he had won all his fame by previously advocating. But it must not be forgotten, that, though supported by neither party, and assailed by both, and set upon by Tory opponents and Whig desirers, which betrayed him into losses of temper and dignity, it was in these years that he carried through Parliament several valuable reforms ; whilst his writings—those records for the perusal of posterity—exhibited no change in his regard for liberal institutions.

On the return of the Tories to power, in 1841, he made, on some occasions, a still wider departure from his early path. He has since shown much acerbity of temper, giving his vote at times to the opponents, as well as to the friends of reform, and has succeeded in alienating the affections of some of those who adhered to him during the Melbourne Administration. He has been alternately wayward, sour, vindictive, bold, brilliant, noble ; exciting the contempt and fears of his enemies, and the disgust and admiration of his friends ; giving his cheering voice to the repeal of the corn laws, and his growling “non-content” against the repeal of the navigation laws ; making himself ridiculous by trying to force his way into the French National Convention, yet being received with loud plaudits as he entered the hall of the French National Institute ; now losing and then winning the favour of the people ; and ever and anon silencing the cry that “his powers were failing,” by pronouncing a speech on some fitting occasion worthy of his great powers, that startled the walls of St. Stephen’s, and made every hill-top and valley in the land echo back the shout, “Brougham is himself again !”

When his imperfections are forgotten in the grave, and the mists of prejudice and of party are cleared away, posterity, which generously throws a veil over the frailties of genius, will not willingly withhold from his tomb the epitaph he

coveted in one of his earliest speeches—"HERE LIES THE DEFENDER OF LIBERTY, THE ADVOCATE OF PEACE, THE FRIEND OF THE PEOPLE!"

CHAPTER XVII.

Charles, Earl Grey—Advocates Abolition of the Slave Trade—His Rise to Power—His Aid in Carrying the Reform Bill—Sydney Smith's Eulogy—His Two Great Measures, Parliamentary Reform and Abolition of Slavery—The Old and New Whigs—The "Coming Man."

A SKETCH of Modern English Reformers, which should omit special mention of CHARLES, EARL GREY, would be defective. For fifty eventful years he took an active part in public affairs, and with scarcely an exception was found on the liberal side. With a mind cast in a highly polished, but not extraordinarily capacious mould, and in the attributes of originality and genius dwindling by the side of Fox and Brougham, he fully equalled either of these great men in calm sagacity and firmness of purpose. And if his oratory was not of the bold and vigorous type which marked theirs, it was of a high order; graceful, flowing, and classical, and set off by a manner always dignified, and in his younger days peculiarly fascinating.

Entering Parliament in 1786, when he had just reached majority, he immediately distinguished himself by a speech in opposition to the policy of Mr. Pitt. His rapid rise in the House is attested by the fact, that two years after his entrance, he was thought fit to occupy a place on the committee for the impeachment of Warren Hastings, by the side of Burke, Fox, Wyndham, and Sheridan. The year before, he had given a remarkable exhibition of the firmness and integrity which formed such striking features in his future life. In the debate on the Prince of Wales' (George IV.) debts, Mr. Fox, by direction of the Prince, had denied, in his place, the marriage of the Prince with Mrs. Fitzher-

bert. The lady was sorely offended. She must be appeased by a public explanation. Application was made to Grey to make some ambiguous statement in the House, which, without contradicting Fox, might seem to her to do so. Grey contemptuously refused to be the instrument of such duplicity, which ever after made the Prince his enemy.

In 1792, he joined with Whitbread, Erskine, Francis, Sheridan, and Cartwright, in organizing the society for Parliamentary reform, called "The Friends of the People," and the same year sustained their petition in the House by a bold speech, in which he declared, that rather than submit to the existing system of representation, he would adopt universal suffrage.

He was a member of the Grenville-Fox Ministry—ably advocated its great measure for the abolition of the slave trade—and, on the death of Fox, assumed his post as Foreign Secretary, with the lead of the Commons. An attempt to carry a bill to open the army and navy to Roman Catholics provoked a quarrel with the old King, which threw out the Ministry, and brought forth Sydney Smith's immortal Peter Plymley Letters. The death of his father the next year (1807) removed him to the House of Lords, where, during the following twenty-three years of royal proscription, his voice was ever heard defending the cause of human freedom.

His rise to power, and the circumstances under which his Ministry carried the Reform Bill, have been detailed. The calm courage of the Premier steered the Government safely through this unprecedented tempest. Nerves less firm would have relinquished the helm in trepidation—an eye less steady would, by some precipitous movement, have whelmed all in destruction. On that memorable night, when the galleries, and lobbies, and every passage leading to "the tapestried chamber," were crowded with anxious spectators, and the venerable building itself was besieged with excited throngs, representing all stations in society and all shades in politics, who had come up to the metropolis from every part of the kingdom, to witness the de-

cision of the long-pending struggle between the nobles and the people, Earl Grey, with a dignity and solemn earnestness befitting the august occasion, told the ancient nobility of Britain, that "though he was proud of the rank to which they in common belonged, and would peril much to save it from ruin, yet if they were determined to reject that bill, and throw it scornfully back in the faces of an aroused and determined people, he warned them to set their houses speedily in order, for their hour had come!" History has already recorded the result of that appeal. The majesty of the subject was asserted, and the hereditary rulers of England swore allegiance to the principle, "The people are the legitimate source of power." Never did popular agitation, wielding the peaceful weapons of truth, more brilliantly display its superiority over physical force, and the enginery of war, in accomplishing a great and salutary revolution.

Sydney Smith, speaking of Earl Grey, at a reform meeting, while the bill was pending, said: "You are directed by a minister who prefers character to place, and who has given such unequivocal proofs of honesty and patriotism, that his image ought to be amongst your household gods, and his name to be lisped by your children. Two thousand years hence it will be a legend like the fable of Perseus and Andromeda; Britannia chained to a mountain—two hundred rotten animals* menacing her destruction, till a tall Earl, armed with Schedule A,† and followed by his page, Russell, drives them into the deep, and delivers over Britannia in safety to crowds of ten-pound renters, who deafen the air with their acclamations. Forthwith, Latin verses upon this—school exercises—boys whipt, and all the usual absurdities of education."

This is sufficiently grotesque; but it is only Smith's way of expressing the unquestionable fact, that Earl Grey was the very man who could, if mortal man could, carry such a measure in the face of the aristocracy of England. The people trusted him, and the same portion of the hostile fac-

* Rotten Boroughs.

† The list of disfranchised boroughs.

tions opposed him less obstinately than they would some more boisterous member of the liberal party, whom they could stigmatize as a "fanatic," or a "revolutionist." And even "the radicals" well knew, that to make a brilliant onslaught upon a strong Tory Ministry, while the Reform party was weak—and it mattered little *what* was said and done, if *something* was only said and done—was a very different mission from attempting to lead that party when its swelled ranks required to be consolidated under a graver chieftain, with experience ripened by once having been a leading Minister of the Crown, who might plant the conquering flag on the walls of the citadel. Such a chieftain was Earl Grey.

The two measures of Earl Grey's Administration, which made it honourably conspicuous through the world, and will give it an enduring name with posterity, are Parliamentary reform, and the abolition of negro slavery. The defects in the former will be hereafter alluded to. The latter was clogged by the ill-contrived apprenticeship system. But, defective though they were, had his administration done nothing more for reform, the glory of those would atone for all its errors of omission and commission. The measure by whose magic touch eight hundred thousand slaves leaped to freedom, and bestowed the munificent gift of twenty millions sterling upon their masters, gave his Government greater renown abroad than the reform in Parliament. But the latter was much the more important event to the British nation. It was an era in its polities, big with present and future consequences. By bestowing the elective franchise on half a million of traders and artisans in the cities and towns, it struck a blow at exclusive privileges of the landed interest from which it can never recover—subjected the Government more directly to the influence of public opinion—and opened the doors of Parliament to a new class of men, springing from and sympathizing with the people, who, by their services within and beyond the walls of the legislature, have left their enduring mark on the policy of the country. By recognizing the principle of representation, as opposed to prescription, it took the first step toward the completo-

political enfranchisement of the people, and uniform representation in the House of Commons. It was as worthy to be called a *revolution* as the event that deposed the Stuarts and enthroned William of Orange. The changes it has already wrought are as momentous, and the principles it involved are as great, as anything which the whole course of that revolution achieved.

It is a singular fact in political and personal history, that the man who, in the freshness of youth and in the face of popular clamour, broached the measure of Parliamentary reform, should, forty years afterwards, in the maturity of age, be selected to lead the people in its consummation. The fitting counterpart is the no less striking fact, that the very Prince by whose choice he completed this work, and who, about the period of its commencement, denounced Wilberforce as worthy of expulsion from Parliament for proposing the abolition of the slave trade, lived long enough to give his royal assent, in the presence of that Wilberforce, to a bill for the abolition of slavery itself.

Earl Grey may be regarded as in some respects the last of his political school. He was a singular compound of the aristocracy of the old Whigs, with the liberality of the new. The trusted leader of the popular party, in the hour of its first triumph, cherished an exalted opinion of what he termed "his order;" and though he never shrank from any duty or peril in support of the common cause, and voluntarily shared in the long exclusion of all grades of reformers from office and court favour, his pride and austerity were so habitual as to cool his friends, while they exasperated his foes. In exclusiveness and aristocratic bearing, he seemed to belong to the Whigs of the times of the first two Georges. On the other hand, he exhibited, in his political sympathies, associations, and conduct, all the democratic tendencies of the Whigs of the Fox and Russell school.

The old Whigs, of whom Walpole and Grafton were the type, were distinguished by large possessions, long titles, and "a landed air." By arrogance, gold, and skill, they ruled England from the death of Queen Anne to the ascen-

sion of Lord North. Then arose the new Whigs, whose type was Fox and Grenville. Their chief supporters came from bustling manufacturing towns and flourishing seaports, as those of the old came from rural districts and rotten boroughs; the sign of the one being the broadcloth of the stock exchange; of the other, the broad acres of the agricultural counties. Indeed, on the coming in of the younger Pitt, parties might be said to have changed places without changing names; the Tories assuming the power of the old Whigs, and like them, ruling *over* the people; whilst the old disappeared, and the new arose in the place of the ascendant Tories, and assuming the Tory attitude of opposition, and basing it on *quasi* democratic principles, struggled for power *with* the people.

Grey's administration was the reign of the new Whigs. It was continued by Melbourne. Another party has since gradually arisen, from seeds sown long ago by liberal hands. It knew not the ancient Whigs; it regards not the modern. Its type is Cobden and Hume, with symptoms of affinity in such noblemen as the Earl of Carlisle. It is altogether impossible, indeed, that the old parties who divided power between them in an unreformed Parliament, should remain as they were, under the influence of the new popular elements which have transformed as well as reinvigorated the British Constitution. They must still, however, under some name and form, include the old elements of the liberal and the conservative parties—the one bent on improvement, prone to change, and only too apt to believe that all that is venerable must be decrepit, and that whatever is novel and untried must be good; the other clinging to all that is old, chiefly because it is so, and while opposing a wholesome check to the rashness of modern innovation, clinging with an unwise and blind veneration to much which, though once good, has long outlived its usefulness, and remains but as empty forms and unsubstantial shadows of the past. It once looked forward to the day when its leader and Premier would be Earl Durham. What remained of this hope after his unlucky Canadian administration, was soon quenched in

his grave. The nation will now select its chief man from the ranks of the people, which henceforth, we may hope, shall embrace all ranks, and will select the ablest man irrespective of mere conventional claims.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Abolition of Negro Slavery—Canning's Resolutions of 1823—Insurrection in Demerara—"Missionary Smith's Case"—Immediate Abolition—Elizabeth Heyrick—O'Connell—Brougham's celebrated Speech of 1830—Insurrection and Anarchy in Jamaica in 1832—William Knibb—Parliamentary Inquiry—Buxton—The Apprenticeship adopted, August 1833—Result of Complete Emancipation in Antigua—The Apprenticeship Doomed—The Colonies themselves terminate it, August 1, 1838.

THE tribute which Great Britain has paid to the genius of Humanity, by her efforts and sacrifices for the abolition of the African Slave Trade and Negro Slavery, is the aspect in which she delights to be contemplated by other nations. The humblest Englishman is proud to reiterate the sentiment, uttered half a century ago by Curran : "I speak in the spirit of our Constitution, which makes Liberty commensurate with and inseparable from our soil ; which proclaims, even to the stranger and the sojourner, the moment he sets his foot upon our native earth, that the ground he treads is holy, and consecrated by the genius of Universal Emancipation. No matter in what language his doom may have been pronounced ; no matter what complexion, incompatible with freedom, an Indian or an African sun may have burnt upon him ; no matter in what disastrous battle his liberty may have been cloven down ; no matter with what solemnities he may have been devoted on the altar of slavery : the first moment he touches our sacred soil, the altar and the god sink together in the dust ; his soul walks abroad in her own majesty ; his body swells beyond the measure of his chains, that burst around him ; and he stands redeemed, regenerated, and disenthralled, by the irresistible genius of Uni-

versal Emancipation." The services and victories of Sharpe, Clarkson, Wilberforce, Stephen, Brougham, Macaulay, Buxton, Lushington, Gurney, Sturge, O'Connell, Mackintosh, and their fellow-labourers in this department of philanthropy, have indeed achieved for Britain a victory of which she may well be proud, and set an example to other civilized nations, which has already produced worthy fruit.

After the abolition of the slave trade, the attention of a few thoughtful and humane persons was turned toward slavery itself, of which the trade was only an incident. Public sentiment was gradually enlisted, till, in 1823, it had become sufficiently aroused to cause the passage, in Parliament, of Mr. Canning's celebrated resolutions, declaring the expediency of adopting decisive measures for ameliorating the condition of the slave population in the colonies, preparatory to their complete emancipation. A ministerial circular was sent to the colonies, directing the authorities to act upon those resolutions in the future treatment of the slave population. But, as was predicted by those who had studied the genius of Slavery, the resolutions and circular were either contemptuously defied, coolly disregarded, or courteously evaded by the colonies.

The latter part of the same year, an insurrection broke out in Demerara. The infuriated planters undertook to trace its origin to the religious teachings of a venerable English missionary of most pure and exemplary character, the Rev. John Smith. He was seized, and, after resisting some attempts to extort confessions, and going through a trial in which the very semblance of justice was outraged, was convicted, and sentenced to death. In feeble health, he was thrown into a small and loathsome dungeon, where, after several weeks of intense suffering, he died. This attempt to

" — Bring back
The Hall of Horrors, and the assessor's pen
Recording answers shrieking upon the rack,"

produced a tremendous sensation in England. Early in June, Mr. Brougham introduced into Parliament a motion

to censure the Government and Court of Demerara. A debate of surpassing interest followed, in which he supported his motion by two powerful speeches. It was on this occasion that Mr. Wilberforce made his last speech in Parliament. The motion was lost by a small majority.

These proceedings, touching a case of individual outrage, are worthy of special note, because they aroused a spirit in England that would never be put down, till the last chain was stricken from the last slave. "The Missionary Smith's Case" became a rallying cry with all the friends of religious freedom, and all the enemies of West India slavery. The measures of the Abolitionists became more bold—their principles commanded a more general concurrence—those who voted against the motion of Mr. Brougham were either excluded from the next Parliament, or obtained their seats with extreme difficulty ; and, to quote from the preface to Mr. Brougham's speeches, " All men now saw that the warning given in the peroration of the latter, though sounded in vain across the Atlantic Ocean, was echoing with a loudness redoubled with each repetition through the British isles ; that it had rung the knell of the system ; and that at the fetters of the slave a blow was at length struck, which must, if followed up, make them fall off his limbs for ever."

The year 1830 was memorable for a great advance in the principles of the Abolitionists, and the influence they exerted on public opinion. The doctrine of *immediate* as opposed to *gradual* abolition, had been set forth in a well-reasoned pamphlet, published anonymously in 1824, which was afterward found to have been written by Elizabeth Heyrick, of Leicester. It now became the watchword of the anti-slavery societies, their publications, and orators. The speech of Dr. Andrew Thomson amidst the citizens of Edinburgh, with Francis Jeffrey in the chair, gave it a resistless impulse. The anniversary meeting of the metropolitan association in the same year was addressed by some of the most distinguished men in the kingdom. It was on this occasion that Daniel O'Connell uttered the noble and comprehensive sentiment—"I am for speedy, immediate

abolition. I care not what caste, creed, or colour, slavery may assume. I am for its total, its instant abolition. Whether it be personal or political, mental or corporeal, intellectual or spiritual, I am for its immediate abolition. I enter into no compromise with Slavery ; I am for justice, in the name of humanity, and according to the law of the living God."

In July of the same year, Mr. Brougham introduced his motion in the Commons, just before the adjournment, pledging the House to take the subject of Abolition into consideration early the next session. His speech in its support, and which essentially contributed to his election for Yorkshire a few weeks afterward, as the successor of Wilberforce, contains the oft-cited passage : "I trust that at length the time is come when Parliament will no longer bear to be told that slave-owners are the best lawgivers on slavery ; no longer allow an appeal from the British public to such communities as those in which the Smiths and the Grims-dalls are persecuted to death for teaching the gospel to the negroes ; and the Mosses holden in affectionate respect for torture and murder : no longer suffer our voice to roll across the Atlantic in empty warnings and fruitless orders. Tell me not of rights—talk not of the property of the planter in his slaves. I deny the right—I acknowledge not the property. The principles, the feelings of our common nature, rise in rebellion against it. Be the appeal made to the understanding, or to the heart, the sentence is the same that rejects it. In vain you tell me of laws that sanction such a crime ! There is a law above all the enactments of human codes—the same throughout the world—the same in all times—such as it was before the daring genius of Columbus pierced the night of ages, and opened to one world the sources of power, wealth, and knowledge ; to another, all unutterable woes : such as it is at this day. It is the law written by the finger of God on the heart of man ; and by that law unchangeable and eternal, while men despise fraud, and loathe rapine, and abhor blood, they will reject with indignation the wild and guilty fantasy, that man can

hold property in man! In vain you appeal to treaties, to covenants between nations: the Covenants of the Almighty, whether the Old Covenant or the New, denounce such unholy pretensions. To those laws did they of old refer, who maintained the African trade. Such treaties did they cite, and not untruly; for by one shameful compact you bartered the glories of Blenheim for the traffic of blood. Yet, despite of law and of treaty, that infernal traffic is now destroyed, and its votaries put to death like other pirates. How came this change to pass? Not, assuredly, by Parliament leading the way; but the country at length awoke: the indignation of the people was kindled; it descended in thunder, and smote the traffic, and scattered its guilty profits to the winds. Now, then, let the planters beware—let their Assemblies beware—let the Government at home beware—let the Parliament beware! The same country is once more awake—awake to the condition of negro slavery; the same indignation kindles in the bosom of the same people; the same cloud is gathering that annihilated the slave trade; and, if it shall descend again, they on whom its crash may fall, will not be destroyed before I have warned them; but I pray that their destruction may turn away from us the more terrible judgments of God!"

The French Revolution of 1830, the turning out of the Wellington and the coming in of the Grey Ministry, and the protracted contest for Parliamentary reform, absorbed a large share of the public attention for the next eighteen months. Meanwhile, the Abolitionists, taking advantage of the liberal tendencies of the times, gathered strength by agitating the country through numerous publications and addresses, from some of the most able pens and eloquent tongues in the kingdom.

In 1831-2, an outbreak in Jamaica inflamed the already excited mind of England to an unusual pitch. An attempt to deprive some of the negroes of their wonted Christmas holidays conspired with a report that Parliament had abolished slavery to provoke a revolt. The masters fled, the troops interfered and slaughtered a large number of the in-

surgents, leaving the courts to put to death a few hundred in a more leisurely way. Not content with this, the planters glutted their vengeance by pulling down several chapels of the Baptist and Independent missionaries—forbidding meetings for religious worship in which slaves participated—driving some of the ministers to the mountains, and hunting them like beasts of prey—throwing others into prison—whilst a more fortunate few escaped to England. Among the latter was the Rev. William Knibb, a Baptist preacher of great courage, and considerable powers of eloquence. Arriving in the mother country in June 1832, he perambulated the island, and in conjunction with George Thompson, a speaker of ability, who was employed as an anti-slavery lecturer, stirred the national heart to its core.

Parliament was not idle. In May of this year, the West Indian interest in the House of Lords procured the appointment of a committee of inquiry into the state of the islands. It was mainly composed of opponents of abolition. The friends of liberty in the Commons, alarmed at this hostile proceeding, obtained through their leader, Mr. T. Fowell Buxton, a committee to consider the expediency of abolishing slavery in the islands. Mr. Buxton was chairman of the committee. These two committees were in session when the exiled Jamaica missionaries arrived. They were examined as witnesses, with some sixty others, representing both sides of the question—the inquiry extending through nearly three months. The result was, an overwhelming case against slavery. Both parties now girded themselves for the contest. The Ministry of Earl Grey had recently carried the Reform Bill. It was a favourable moment for the friends of freedom to strike. Early in the session of 1833, Mr. Buxton was about to bring forward a motion for the immediate abolition of slavery, when Mr. Stanley, the Colonial Secretary, superseded him, by pledging Ministers to introduce a measure, without delay, which “should be safe and satisfactory to all parties.”

Mr. Stanley brought out the Government plan of abolition on the 14th of May 1833. Mr. Buxton now wished he had

kept the work in his own hands. Stanley's bill bore the stereotyped ministerial stamp. It was a compromise between what justice demanded and what oppression would grant. It immediately emancipated all slaves under six years of age, and subjected house servants to an apprenticeship of four years, and agricultural servants of six years, to their former masters ; and gave to the latter a compensation of £20,000,000. At the end of the apprenticeship, the negroes were to be completely free.

Leading Abolitionists denounced the scheme, compelled Ministers to reduce the period of apprenticeship from twelve (as first proposed) to four and six years, protested against compensation ; but, fearful of losing the boon, the majority finally yielded their opposition. In Parliament, the measure was discussed with patient and earnest zeal ; the friends of immediate abolition striving to remedy its defects—the West India interest contesting every clause with heroic pertinacity. After able rhetorical displays on all sides, with much patience and philanthropy on one, and a good deal of bad temper and bad ethics, mingled with prophecies of bankruptcy and bloodshed, on the other, the bill became a law on the 28th day of August 1833.

In its actual workings, the apprenticeship realized most of the objections made to it by the Abolitionists, and few of the horrible forebodings of their opponents. The instant transition of 800,000 slaves into *quasi* freemen was not attended by any disorder whatever. And during the four years which the ill-contrived scheme lasted, not a drop of blood was shed ; crimes of all grades diminished ; vagrancy seldom showed its head ; property was respected ; the adults abandoned many of those domestic vices incident to a state of slavery ; the children filled the schools ; and this class of West Indian society rose in the scale of civilization and morals. And even after the forts were dismantled, and the troops sent away to prevent an insurrection among the whites of Canada, the planters in the West Indian Isles slept on quiet pillows.

But though a wide remove from slavery, the apprentice-

ship was not a paradise to the parties. The dissonance was inherent in the nature of the plan. Looking to harmonious results, it gave the planters too much power, or too little; the negroes too much liberty, or too little. The consequence was, interminable disputes between masters and apprentices; between planters and special justices; between the Home Government and the Colonial authorities. The majority of the justices, who had the chief agency in executing the Abolition Act, endeavoured to do it in a humane spirit, though there were not wanting cases which gave evidence of the influence which the wealthy planters could not fail to exercise over the minds of some of these judges.

Antigua and the Bermudas discarded the apprenticeship, and adopted complete abolition, the act giving to the colonies the alternative. Experience justified the wisdom of their choice. They reaped all the good fruits of the apprenticeship, and none of the bad. Messrs. Thome and Kimball, of America, visited Antigua, Barbadoes, and Jamaica, in 1837. From their admirable "Six Months' Tour," I quote the following description of the "immediate" conversion to free men of 30,000 slaves of Antigua on the 1st of August 1834:—

"For some time previous to the 1st of August, forebodings of disaster lowered over the island. The day was fixed! Thirty thousand degraded human beings were to be brought forth from the dungeon of slavery, and 'turned loose on the community,' and this was to be done 'in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye!' Gloomy apprehensions were entertained by many of the planters. Some timorous families did not go to bed on the night of the 31st of July; fear drove sleep from their eyes, and they awaited with fluttering pulse the hour of midnight, fearing lest the same bell which sounded the jubilee of the slaves might toll the death-knell of the masters. Several American vessels which had lain for weeks in the harbour weighed anchor on the 31st of July, and made their escape, through actual fear that the island would be destroyed on the following day. . . . The Wesleyans kept 'watch night' in all their chapels on

the night of the 31st. At St. John's, the spacious building was filled with the candidates for liberty. All was animation and eagerness. A mighty chorus of voices swelled the song of expectation and joy, and, as they united in prayer, the voice of the leader was drowned in universal acclamations of thanksgiving, and praise, and blessing, and honour, and glory to God, who had come down for their deliverance. In such exercises the evening was spent until the hour of twelve approached. The missionary then proposed that, when the clock on the cathedral should begin to strike, the whole congregation should fall upon their knees, and receive the boon of freedom in silence. Accordingly, as the loud bell tolled its first note, the immense assembly fell prostrate on their knees. All was silence, save the quivering half-stifled breath of the struggling spirit. The slow notes of the clock fell upon the multitude; peal on peal, peal on peal, rolled over the prostrate throng, in tones of angels' voices, thrilling among the desolate chords and weary heart-strings. Scarce had the clock sounded its last note, when the lightning flashed vividly around, and a loud peal of thunder roared along the sky—God's pillar of fire and trump of jubilee. A moment of profoundest silence passed—then came the *burst*—they broke forth in prayer; they shouted, they sung, ‘Glory,’ ‘alleluia;’ they clapped their hands, leaped up, fell down, clasped each other in their free arms, cried, laughed, went to and fro, tossing upward their unfettered hands; but high above the whole there was a mighty sound, which ever and anon swelled up; it was the utterings in broken negro dialect of gratitude to God.”

The experiment of immediate abolition in Antigua and the Bermudas, and of the apprenticeship in the other colonies, has established the following facts: That, while melioration is a great improvement on chattel slavery, yet immediate and complete emancipation is far preferable: That either change is safe to the person and property of the master: That, for either, it is rather the master than the slave who needs preparation.

Considerations of principle, uniting with a mass of facts

showing the superiority of immediate emancipation over the apprenticeship, induced the Abolitionists of England, in 1836-7, to take a final stand for the complete disenthralment of the negro. A numerous Convention of delegates met in London in November 1837 ; resolved that the apprenticeship should cease on or before the first of August 1838 ; memorialized the Government against its continuance ; and, through a deputation, waited on the Colonial Secretary, to enforce their appeal. They were coldly, not to say contemptuously, treated by Lord Glenelg. After selecting a Central Committee, to watch the Ministry and Parliament, the delegates went home to agitate the country. Thompson, Wardlaw, Murray, Smeal, and their coadjutors, aroused Scotland ; whilst Sturge, Buxton, Scoble, and their friends, shook England. In the course of the autumn and winter, petitions poured into Parliament in unprecedented numbers, whilst seven hundred thousand women presented their prayer to the Queen in behalf of her oppressed female subjects in the Western Isles.

Parliament began to move. On the 20th of February 1838, Lord Brougham, in presenting a petition from Glasgow, signed by upwards of 100,000 persons, moved a series of resolutions for the speedy termination of the apprenticeship, supporting them by a speech worthy of his brightest fame, and the immediate publication of which produced a deep impression upon the country. I cannot forbear quoting the closing paragraph of the peroration :—

“ So now the fulness of time is come for at length discharging our duty to the African captive. I have demonstrated to you that everything is ordered—every previous step taken—all safe, by experience shown to be all safe, for the long-desired consummation. The time has come, the trial has been made, the hour is striking : you have no longer a pretext for hesitation, or faltering, or delay. The slave has shown, by four years’ blameless behaviour and devotion to the pursuits of peaceful industry, that he is as fit for his freedom as any English peasant—ay, or any lord whom I now address. I demand his rights ; I demand his

liberty without stint. In the name of justice and of law, in the name of reason, in the name of God, who has given you no right to work injustice, I demand that your brother be no longer trampled upon as your slave! I make my appeal to the Commons, who represent the free people of England, and I require at their hands the performance of that condition for which they paid so enormous a price—that condition which all their constituents are in breathless anxiety to see fulfilled! I appeal to this House. Hereditary judges of the first tribunal in the world, to you I appeal for justice! Patrons of all the arts that humanize mankind, under your protection I place humanity herself! To the merciful sovereign of a free people, I call aloud for mercy to the hundreds of thousands for whom half a million of her Christian sisters have cried aloud; I ask that their cry may not have risen in vain. But first I turn my eye to the Throne of all Justice, and devoutly humbling myself before Him who is of purer eyes than to behold such vast iniquities, I implore that the curse hovering over the head of the unjust and the oppressor be averted from us—that your hearts may be turned to mercy—and that over all the earth His will may at length be done."

On the 29th of March, Sir George Strickland brought forward a motion in the Commons, for the termination of the apprenticeship on the 1st of August following. Ministers resisted, and it was lost. While the motion was pending, two large anti-slavery Conventions met in London, and soon afterwards five thronged meetings were held in Exeter Hall, in whose proceedings Brougham, Buxton, O'Connell, and other distinguished men, played a prominent part. The obstinate course of the Cabinet had not only exasperated public opinion at home, but had produced a feverish excitement amongst the apprentices in the colonies.

In the midst of this furious contest, whose issue was shrouded in darkness, light suddenly broke in from an unexpected quarter. A ministerial despatch, dated the very day after the November convention met, appeared in the West India newspapers, addressed to the Colonial Governors, in

which Lord Glenelg informed them that agitation had again commenced, and would no doubt go on as before, and urging them to impress on the Legislatures the necessity of doing for themselves, and in season, what the people of England were seeking to compel the Parliament to do for them. Thus the Cabinet, while presenting a bold front at home, was saving its life by indirectly and secretly doing the work Abolitionists were forcing it to perform.

Simultaneously with the arrival in England of the journals containing copies of the despatch, came the news, that the two small islands of Montserrat and Nevis had yielded to the ministerial solicitation, and resolved to emancipate their apprentices on the 1st of August. Other small islands soon copied their example. Barbadoes, with her 83,000 apprentices, followed in the train. Then came Jamaica, with her 330,000. This settled the question. Other colonies now gave way, and Ministers pledged themselves that all should be completed by the appointed day. It was done—the Cabinet averted an inglorious defeat—the planters escaped a hurricane of violence in a dark night of negro insurrection—and on the first day of August 1838, the friends of emancipation assembled in all parts of the empire, to render thanksgiving to God for the final overthrow of British negro slavery.

The great work of 1834 and 1838, which we have hastily scanned, was accomplished by the people, and not by the Government. It was worthy to be the offering by a great nation, as a recognition of the unalterable laws of divine justice, and an evidence to the world that Britain, in resuming her own liberty, wished to share the divine gift with all over whom her influence extended.

The conduct of the emancipated negroes during the last fourteen years has justified the eulogium pronounced upon them by Lord Brougham, in the last of the two quotations from him. The magistrate has driven out the overseer; the school has taken the place of the whipping-post; the press has supplanted the tread-mill. It is said that the large landed estates are diminishing in value; that the quantity

of sugar, coffee, and rum, annually produced, decreases ; that the negroes are reluctant to labour upon these large properties, preferring to set up little shops, or work at trades, or cultivate small grounds on their own account. In the mass of conflicting testimony, it is difficult to guess at the precise facts. I presume that, to a large extent, these reports are true. Monopolies in the flesh of man, and in the soil he tills, are at war with Nature and with God. If they have been long continued, a change will produce some bitter fruits. But they will be the growth of the evil rather than the remedy. It is not to be supposed that the negro is to prefer the laborious field labour, associated with all the miseries of his former state of degradation, to independence. Time, however, must be allowed to test all the fruits of the system, and meanwhile, the friends of liberty will not doubt that a population of freemen will prove better subjects, and more faithful and industrious colonists, than a few haughty and privileged proprietors, with their thousands of degraded and toiling British slaves. Thank God such a thing no longer exists as a British slave.

CHAPTER XIX.

Notices of some Prominent Abolitionists — T. Fowell Buxton — Zachary Macaulay — Joseph Sturge — William Allen — James Cropper — Joseph, John, and Samuel Gurney — George William Alexander — Thomas Pringle — Charles Stuart — John Scoble — Rev. Dr. Thomson — Rev. Dr. Wardlaw — Rev. Mr. James.

SIR THOMAS FOWELL BUXTON was the Abolition leader in the House of Commons during the anti-slavery conflicts of 1832 and 1833. His life is a beautiful illustration of Solomon's saying, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." At six years of age, he lost his father; but there was left to him

that most valuable of blessings, a vigorous-minded, well-educated, virtuous mother, who watched his young days with painstaking solicitude. He was naturally of a sportive, roving disposition, and at first made greater proficiency in the practice of hunting and fishing than in the study of mathematics and the languages. He, however, greatly distinguished himself at the Dublin University, where he gained some of the highest honours; and the teachings of his mother inclined his maturer years to the exercise of a high-toned Christian philanthropy. The training of the child was shown in the actions of the man. Mr. Buxton's public life was devoted to meliorating the condition of the unfortunate classes of society. Especially was he the friend of prisoners, criminals, and slaves. While a young man, he took a lively interest in prison discipline—published a work on that subject in 1816, the result of observations in the prisons of France and Belgium. These he visited in company with the well-known Quaker philanthropists, Joseph John Gurney, and Elizabeth Fry, to one of whose sisters he was married—and having taken his seat in the Commons in 1819, he joined Mackintosh in his efforts to limit the death-penalty, and soften other severe features of the criminal code.

Surrounded by a strong Quaker influence from his youth, his mother being a Friend, which was subsequently increased by his marriage with a sister of the Gurneys and Mrs. Elizabeth Fry, Mr. Buxton's mind was early turned toward the state of slavery in the colonies. In 1821 (I think), immediately after he had delivered an able speech in the House on prison discipline, Mr. Wilberforce wrote him an earnest letter, alluding to his own services in abolishing the slave trade, and requesting Buxton to join him in "a truly holy alliance" for meliorating the condition of the negro slaves, and ultimately advancing them to the rank of a free peasantry; and, in view of his advancing years, solicited Buxton to become his successor in "the blessed service," when increasing infirmities should compel him to relinquish the lead to younger hands. Mr. Buxton at once threw his mind

and heart into the work, and his subsequent ability and devotion to it justified the compliment of Wilberforce, a few years afterward, when he called him his "Parliamentary Executor."

The resolutions of 1823, which have already been mentioned, were moved by Mr. Canning, as an amendment to a more radical proposition introduced by Mr. Buxton. To him, therefore, humanity is indebted for the first important ministerial step towards Abolition, which was the precursor of all that followed till the end was attained. It is with reference to the debate on this occasion, I believe, that the anecdote is told of "Brougham helping Buxton, and Buxton helping Brougham." Buxton was to move the proposition, and Brougham was to second him. Due notice had been given, and the West India interest was in commotion. Buxton anticipated that an attempt would be made to cough and scrape him down, not an unusual practice then in this "assembly of the first gentlemen in the world." Just as Buxton was rising, Brougham whispered to him, "I will cheer *you* with all my might, and then you must cheer *me*." "Agreed!" responded the agitated politician, who, in the suppressed mutterings and growlings, saw a storm was brewing. But he went on, Brougham crying "Hear! hear! hear!" so vigorously, and stamping and cheering so lustily, that the West Indians were dumb with wonder, and permitted Buxton to finish his speech without much interruption. Mr. Canning replied in his adroit and elegant style, moved his amendment, and resumed his seat under cheers from all sides. Brougham sprang to his feet, full of excitement with the great theme. Members cried, "Divide! divide!" in deafening tones. But the speaker stood firm, lifted his voice above the tempest, and began to roll out long sentences crowded with big thoughts, while Buxton's shouts of "Hear! hear! hear!" silenced the clamour for a time until his cheers of the matchless eloquence of his colleague becoming contagious, Brougham wound up a great speech amid thunders of applause.

It has already been stated, that in May 1832, on the

motion of Mr. Buxton, a committee was appointed in the Commons, to inquire into and report upon the most expedient measures for the extinction of slavery throughout the British dominions. The sittings of this committee did not terminate till August; and his labours as chairman of this committee, of which Lord John Russell, Sir Robert Peel, and other distinguished statesmen, were members, were indefatigable, and worthy of the highest praise. His permitting the reins of leadership in this measure to slip into the hands of the compromising Colonial Secretary, the next spring, was censured by some Abolitionists. But no man strove more earnestly than he to remedy the defects in the ministerial plan. He repeatedly divided the House on amendments, and succeeded in reducing the period of apprenticeship one-half; and any ground which he might have lost by the transactions of 1833, was nobly redeemed by his subsequent services in bringing to an end a system, which, at the outset, he had denounced as "unjust in principle, indefensible in policy, and anomalous, unnatural, and unnecessary."

After the abolition of the apprenticeship, Mr. Buxton turned his attention to the slave trade. In June 1839, he instituted the "Society for Extinction of the Slave Trade and for the Civilization of Africa," and was appointed its chairman. The same year, he brought out an elaborate work on "The Slave Trade and its Remedy," which was followed the next year by an enlarged edition, extending to some 600 pages. It is the most valuable and authentic publication extant on that subject. The facts it detailed, as to the extent of the traffic, astonished all who paid any attention to what Mr. Pitt had denominated "the greatest practical evil that ever afflicted mankind." While for a quarter of a century "the triumphs of humanity in the abolition of the African slave trade" had rounded the periods of orators in the British Senate, Mr. Buxton proves that in 1840, and for a long period before, the victims of the traffic were more numerous, and its features more grim and bloody, than when Clarkson entered upon his philanthropic work in 1786. If

Mr. Buxton had done nothing more during his life than to open the eyes of deluded Christendom to the extent of this atrocious piracy, he would be entitled to the thanks of mankind.

The publication of his volume stimulated the British Government to greater efforts for bringing the traffic to an end. Though his main remedy, the civilization of Africa, showed a comprehensive and benevolent mind, the African expeditions undertaken in accordance with his plan were less successful than he fondly anticipated ; and many of the best-informed persons became firmly fixed in the opinion, that the only effectual remedy for the slave trade is the complete abolition of slavery itself. Anything short of this is at best only amelioration, and not extermination. While it is believed that Mr. Buxton never abandoned faith in his favourite plan, yet, till the close of his laborious and philanthropic life, he was the steady friend of all efforts for the overthrow of slavery and the slave trade throughout the world.

Mr. Buxton—or Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, by which honourable title his name is now more familiar—possessed large wealth, which he liberally devoted to the promotion of benevolent enterprises—had a clear and capacious mind, well stocked with useful knowledge—was ever under the influence of a liberal heart and catholic spirit—and his fine figure added dignity to his eloquent appeals, whether pleading for justice and mercy before an adverse House of Commons, or surrounded by applauding thousands in Exeter Hall.

Next to Mr. Buxton, if indeed he was not in advance of him, Mr. ZACHARY MACAULAY exerted as wide an influence in marshalling public sentiment for the victory of 1833-4, as any person in the kingdom. His services were not of an ostentatious kind, being confined chiefly to the committee room and the editorial chair. Having resided both in Africa and the West Indies, his practical acquaintance with the matters in controversy imparted rare value to his counsels, while his acute and powerful pen was in constant requisition, to prepare reports of committees,

memorials to Parliament, pamphlets for general distribution, and articles for the periodical press. The self-sacrificing spirit in which he wore out his life in the cause received additional lustre from the rare fact that he coveted none of the glory of his good works.

Mr. JOSEPH STURGE deserves a prominent place, not only among the Abolitionists, but among the reformers of Great Britain, though in his general view of politics he advocates extreme opinions, in which only a very limited class sympathize. Having taken an active part in preparing public opinion for negro emancipation, he recorded his protest against the apprenticeship. When contradictory statements as to its operation were confusing the English mind, he determined to investigate the matter for himself. Accordingly, in 1836 and 1837 he made a tour of the West Indies. Satisfied of the pernicious character of the scheme, he wrote home, advising an earnest movement for its abolition. On his return, he published the results of his observations—the demand for repeal reverberated through the British Isles—the days of the apprenticeship were numbered. To him, more than to any other man, this consummation is attributable. Soon afterward, he conceived the plan of a General Convention to promote the universal abolition of slavery and the slave trade. The result was, “the World’s Convention,” which met in London in 1840, composed of delegates from many nations and both hemispheres, over whose deliberations the venerable Clarkson presided, and which contributed to the overthrow of East Indian slavery, and gave an impulse to the cause throughout the world.

Mr. Sturge has been an assiduous labourer in other fields of reform. Among the first to embark in the movement for the total repeal of the corn laws, he participated in it till victory crowned the exertions of its friends. During this controversy, he became thoroughly convinced that a more radical and comprehensive reform was requisite to break up the system of class legislation, which bore so heavily on the working masses of the country.

During the last ten years, Mr. Sturge has devoted himself,

with his characteristic zeal and munificence, to the promotion of general education, complete suffrage, church reform, corn-law repeal, slave-trade extermination, universal peace, and the like objects.

On the summoning of a new Parliament in 1847, he reluctantly consented to contest Leeds. In the course of his speech at the hustings, his proposer, the venerable Edward Baines, who had long represented the town, said—"I have to propose for your choice, as one of your representatives in Parliament, my friend and your friend, the friend of his country and of the human race, Joseph Sturge. With his principles you are well acquainted. They are the principles of liberty, of humanity, of economy, of equal rights, of freedom of trade and of thought, of voluntary education, of universal peace, and of justice to all mankind, of whatever colour, and of whatever clime. There are in Parliament an abundance of merchants, of manufacturers, of bankers, of lawyers, of soldiers, of sailors, of ecclesiastical patrons, of peers, and of bishops; but there is a deplorable deficiency of such men as Joseph Sturge." In his address to the electors, Mr. Sturge gave a thorough exposition of his political views, equally unpalatable to the Whig and Tory parties in Leeds, both of which had their candidates in the field. After a hot contest, he was barely defeated by the concentration, as his own supporters affirmed, of a part of the Tory votes upon one of the Whig candidates; but the result was regarded by them as a moral triumph for Mr. Sturge and his cause. Much, however, as he is respected as a man of strict integrity, and of the most generous benevolence and uprightness, it is not to be denied that he advocates extreme opinions, which have hitherto found favour with only a small and uninfluential party in the country.

Mr. Sturge is a member of the Society of Friends, and his beneficent life and amiable deportment are a beautiful embodiment of the principles of that sect. Till within a few years he was extensively engaged in the corn trade, and has long been one of the most wealthy and influential citizens of Birmingham. Not satisfied with devoting liberal sums

and remnants of his time to philanthropic objects, he withdrew from a profitable mercantile connection, that he might consecrate all his energies to the advancement of civil and religious liberty. With no pretensions to literary or oratorical excellence, he is able to express his ideas with terseness and point, both with pen and tongue. His plans, like his mind, are eminently practical ; and he goes straight to the subject-matter, stripping off the husk, somewhat regardless of its texture and hue, and piercing at once to the kernel. His mercantile training has given him business habits of the first order, making him as efficient in executing plans as he is shrewd in their formation. Though a little apt to push aside over cautious obtuseness and sluggishness, he mingles his unostentatious activity with such purity of intention and suavity of manner, as not to offend colder and more timid natures, while doing in a day what would occupy a month in their hands.

In this chapter it would be impossible to name all who bore a prominent part in the cause now under review. The Society of Friends alone kept an army in the field during the war. And no soldiers did better service than the household troops of George Fox. I may name William Allen, to whose many virtues the Duke of Kent gave the highest evidence, by appointing him one of the guardians of his daughter, Victoria ; James Cropper, the munificent Liverpool merchant ; Joseph and Samuel Gurney, the London bankers, the former of whom travelled over the Continent to investigate the state of its prisons, and made the tour of the West Indies to examine into the condition of the emancipated negroes ; and George William Alexander, who has visited France, Denmark, Holland, and Spain, to rouse them to the duty of abolishing slavery.

I can only further allude to Thomas Pringle, not unknown among England's poets, who officiated as secretary of the London Anti-Slavery Society in its infancy, its vigour, and its victory—Captain Charles Stuart, one of the purest and bravest of mankind, whose voice and pen were sacred to Freedom—and John Scoble, who twice visited the West

Indies, and whose oratory on the platform, and terse productions as Secretary of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, were of signal service to the cause.

I will close this chapter by briefly noticing a few of the many clergymen who rendered important services to the Anti-Slavery cause.

North of the Tweed, was the Rev. ANDREW THOMSON, D.D., of Edinburgh, a leading minister of the Kirk of Scotland. He has been dead for many years. Posthumous fame tells wondrous tales of his overpowering eloquence. The reports of his speeches which I have read show him to have been a son of thunder. He did not polish his sentences so much as Dr. Chalmers, but he possessed in large measure the comprehensive views, argumentative power, and splendid imagination, which distinguished that great divine; while, in directness and point, and ability as an orator to arouse and sway the passions of men, he equalled, if not excelled him. But both laboured with a zeal equally generous and disinterested in the cause of the oppressed slave; and it is only because we have so many reasons for remembering the influence of Dr. Chalmers' genius and persuasive eloquence, that we think it less remarkable than that of Dr Thomson in a cause in which the latter shone more conspicuously than in most other aims of his life's labours. A speech of three hours' length, delivered by Dr. Andrew Thomson in 1830, before the Edinburgh Anti-Slavery Society, in vindication of the principle of immediate as opposed to gradual abolition, and which was widely published, brought over the great body of Scottish Abolitionists to the new doctrine, partly, no doubt, because of the high standing of the orator, but chiefly through its intrinsic merits. Its influence crossed the Border, and some of the most zealous of the later Abolitionists were among its English converts.

In striking contrast to Dr. Thomson, was the eminent Independent minister, the Rev. RALPH WARDLAW, D.D., of Glasgow. His person is the fitting embodiment of his large mind; and his benignant countenance is the index of the purity of his heart. Few ever attended his chapel without

pronouncing him a model for the pulpit. He is one of the best readers that ever opened the sacred Volume, and his mellow voice, musical cadence, and chaste delivery, give to the precept or parable he has selected for the exercise a force and reality that never appeared to the hearer before. In his sermon, strength and simplicity seem to blend harmoniously, and give vigour and transparency to the argument; while his felicitous similes and pointed logical acumen illustrate and adorn it, without confusing the reason or sending off the fancy in a chase after mere imagery.

But though justly celebrated as a preacher and a divine, he is not less widely known for his early and steady services in behalf of negro emancipation, and his devotion to the general cause of civil and religious liberty.

Turning from Scottish to English divines, few have taken a more prominent and zealous share in the same good work than the Rev. JOHN ANGELL JAMES of Birmingham. Of Mr. James's course in the early stages of the anti-slavery movement, I cannot speak with certainty. But during the controversy growing out of the apprenticeship, and in the later efforts for the overthrow of slavery and the slave trade throughout the world, the contributions of his pen and voice to the cause received additional influence from his position as one of the most conspicuous leaders of the Congregational body of Great Britain. Perhaps, at the present time, in England, he stands at the head of the denomination which he adorns by his talents and virtues. Mr. James has a high reputation both as a writer and a preacher. I have not had the good fortune to hear him in the pulpit, but I can bear testimony to his power over audiences on the platform. He has the external qualities and the physical embellishments of an orator: a well-proportioned person—a voice of great compass, and as flexible and rich as a flute—a singularly expressive countenance, polished manners, and a graceful gesticulation. These are the frame and border of that grand and beautiful picture which his strong mind and glowing imagination paint before admiring assemblies. He captivates and converts more by winning grace than conquer-

ing power; more by the charms of his rhetoric than the severity of his logic. Let it not be inferred from this that his speeches are devoid of argument. I only mean to say, that his reasoning is not sent into the world bald, but is embellished with artistic skill, and that his speeches bear the hearer onward to conviction in a mixed current of strong argument, elevated sentiment, witty allusions, and happy hits. His appeals to the nobler feelings of the supporters of the cause he is advocating are fully equalled by his adroitness in sweeping away the objections its opponents have strewed in his path, leaving prostrate antagonists to admire the skill and courtesy with which the victor waved rather than hurled them to the ground. In the select social circle he is as attractive as when eliciting public plaudits on the rostrum; and though an ecclesiastical leader, and ready to defend his religious tenets on suitable occasions, his liberal sentiments and courteous bearing toward all sects, have won him troops of friends in every denomination and class of Christians.

But, indeed, the cause of the slave was one which moved all generous hearts, and found in an especial manner hundreds of zealous advocates among the ministers of the gospel of mercy in every denomination. Bishops and clergy of the Church of England, and Presbyterian, Methodist, Independent, and Baptist ministers, with laymen of every class and party, were latterly to be seen on the same platform, striving with one united effort to blot out from free England the last remnant of the stain of slavery, which so disfigured and polluted the old land of freedom,

CHAPTER XX.

Life, Services, and Character of Daniel O'Connell.

EVERY page of Ireland's history during the present century bears the name of DANIEL O'CONNELL. In many important respects he was the greatest of Irishmen. He occupied a first place among the persons who have recently figured in European affairs, and was one of the most celebrated orators of our times. For the last twenty years, few men exerted a more powerful influence on the politics of Great Britain. His sway over his immediate countrymen has probably never been equalled; and yet his work was accomplished ere he quitted the scene, and it was surprising how little sensation his death caused even in Ireland. He was, indeed, better fitted for the turbulent commotions of revolutionary change, than for the calm deliberations of a wise and cautious constitutional reform of abuses. Though his character, like that of all men who leave a deep impress on their age, has been variously estimated by those who, on the one hand, received his warm sympathy and powerful support, or, on the other, encountered his fierce reprobation and vigorous opposition, yet all classes of friends and foes will now concur in the sentiment, that a master spirit has ceased to influence his countrymen.

Mr. O'Connell was admitted to the Dublin bar at a time when Curran, one of the most witty, graceful, and brilliant advocates that ever swayed a jury, and Plunkett, one of the most eloquent lawyers that ever addressed a bench, were in the zenith of their fame. It is sufficient proof of the ability and skill of young O'Connell, to say that he had been at the bar but a year or two before he was surrounded by a large circle of clients, and had won victories over each of the eminent barristers I have named. But it was not possible for a mind composed of such servid elements as his, to

be confined within the purlicus of the courts, looking after the interests of John Doe and Richard Roe; and it soon became evident that he was to mingle with the sober duties of the lawyer the more exciting and less profitable toils of the politician. He came to the bar at one of the most memorable periods of Irish history—the year Ninety-Eight—when the “United Irishmen” struck an unsuccessful blow for the independence of their country. The leaders of the rebellion were arrested for high treason. The life-blood of Robert Emmet was poured out on the scaffold. Several of his compatriots, after suffering long imprisonment, and wandering, as exiles, through Europe, reached America, where they were received with open arms. Among these were Thomas Addis Emmet, the eloquent Attorney-General of New York; Councillor Sampson, one of the acutest lawyers and keenest wits that ever replied to a brother advocate at the bar of New York, and whose father, a dissenting minister, was hanged as a rebel; and Dr. Macneven, who rose to eminence in the medical profession in that city. The rebellion of Ninety-Eight was followed by the legislative union between Great Britain and Ireland. Against this measure Mr. O’Connell, in company with many of his countrymen, uttered a solemn protest. His first political speech was made in opposition to the proposed act, the repeal of which occupied so prominent a place in the efforts of his declining years. This speech, pronounced before the congregated thousands of Dublin, is said not to have been surpassed for power of argument, severity of invective, and splendour of declamation, by any of his later displays on the same subject. He vividly portrayed this as the final degradation which England was about to inflict upon Ireland; and when the deed was done, and he saw the emblems of national individuality borne away from the scene of the Irish Parliament’s brief deliberations, he swore eternal hostility to the measure. Let us never forget, however, that the feelings of Ireland then were precisely what those of Scotland had been, when a similar measure annihilated her national independence; and yet she now looks back to that union as

the source of nearly all her later prosperity and true independence.

Mr. O'Connell now turned his attention to the civil and ecclesiastical disabilities of the Roman Catholics of the kingdom. Of the extent of his services in procuring their removal, I have spoken in another place. To this work he gave up twenty-five of the best years of his life. To him, not the Catholics only, but the Dissenters of every name in Great Britain, are much indebted for the enlargement of their privileges during the last thirty years. This endeared him to large bodies of men, who widely differed from him in religious opinion, giving him a strong hold, Catholic and agitator though he was, upon the Dissenters of England, who, while repudiating his creed, cherished the principle of toleration for which he contended. Mr. O'Connell regarded Catholic Emancipation as the great achievement of his life; and it was that which won for him the title of "The Liberator of Ireland."

During the Catholic controversy, Mr. O'Connell for once departed from the pacific policy which was the guiding principle of his excited life. Dublin was the central heart whence he sent out agitating pulsations through every artery of the Irish body. The corporation of that city was a high Tory municipality, of the most bigoted and vindictive class. The leader of the Emancipationists was often in collision with its members, many of whom encountered his severest attacks. In 1815, Mr. D'Esterre, a member of the corporation, at the instigation of its leading officers, challenged Mr. O'Connell to personal combat. The parties met, and at the first fire D'Esterre fell, mortally wounded. The successful duellist saw his antagonist stretched on the grass at his feet, gasping in death. The awful spectacle left an abiding abhorrence of blood on the sensitive mind of O'Connell. Twenty-five years later he inscribed on the Repeal banner his memorable saying, "No political change is worth the shedding of one drop of human blood." His remorse for the D'Esterre tragedy brought forth the best proofs of repentance. During their lives he contributed

liberally to the support of the widow and children of the man whom he had slain ; and ever after refused, under any provocation, to fight a duel.

After the death of Grattan, Ireland had no champion in the British senate to give utterance to the emotions that swelled her full heart. The Emancipation Act of 1829 opened the doors of the House of Commons to Mr. O'Connell. Born and cradled in Ireland, he had grown up with her people, an Irishman among Irishmen. He landed on the eastern shore of St. George's Channel the same man as when the spires of Dublin faded from his eye in the western horizon. He carried with him a name revered in every cabin from Coleraine to Cork, and familiar to statesmen in England and throughout Europe. Widely as he was known, he was known only as an Irishman ; and his reputation was, in its kind, purely Irish. To his dying day, he gloried in the epithet early bestowed upon him in Parliament, and which, though intended as a reproach, he converted into a talisman—"The member for all Ireland."

A new field was now opened before him. Grattan, alluding to Flood's failure in the English Parliament, said : "An oak of the forest is too old to be transplanted at fifty." Though O'Connell was fifty-four when he entered that body, his Parliamentary career, covering eighteen years, was of the most sturdy growth. His speeches in support of the Reform Bill rank with the ablest which that controversy called forth. He threw his soul into the cause of Negro Emancipation, fighting side by side, in and out of Parliament, with Wilberforce, Clarkson, Buxton, Brougham, and Lushington, till the slave became a man. He early embraced the doctrine of immediate and unconditional emancipation, and was among the few members who voted against the delusive scheme of apprenticeship. He united with Sturge, Wardlaw, and Scoble, in the subsequent movement that restored to the apprentices the full rights of British subjects ; was among the earliest advocates of Rowland Hill's plan of cheap postage ; and was an able supporter of the doctrines and measures of the Anti-Corn Law League. •

The member for all Ireland gave a large share of his thoughts to Irish affairs. Under him the demand for a repeal of the union originated, though probably with as little desire as hope for the accomplishment of it, but rather as a threat and alternative by which to compel the British Parliament into practical concessions to Ireland. The means employed were the same as those by which he obtained Emancipation—popular agitation. The Repeal excitement, which was soothed for a time by the conciliatory course of the Melbourne Government, broke out with increased intensity when Sir Robert Peel rose to power in 1841-2. In the latter year, “Repeal!” resounded from every parish in the island. The next year saw the “monster meetings,” when the assembled populace, which swayed under the inspiring eloquence of the Liberator, was measured by acres. The Government was alarmed. Previous to a grand demonstration at Clontarf, O’Connell, and five others, were arrested for conspiring to change the laws of the realm by intimidation. The trials, which consumed nearly the whole of January 1844, resulted in the conviction of most of the defendants. O’Connell, when brought up for sentence, pronounced an able and dignified protest against the proceedings. He was adjudged to pay a fine of £2000, be imprisoned one year, and give sureties to keep the peace for seven. He brought a writ of error to the House of Lords. In the meantime he was sent to the Richmond Penitentiary. The Lords reversed the judgment. After spending three months in a prison, where his “cell” was fitted up and filled like the presence-chamber of a king, and his “confinement” consisted in walking among arbours and parterres that “a Shenstone might have envied,” he was released, and, mounted on a triumphal car, rode in state to his residence in Dublin, attended by thousands of his shouting countrymen. Such a liberation of a political prisoner, by a decision of the House of Lords, under a Tory ministry, was a tolerably satisfactory index of the beneficial changes already wrought on the British Parliament. In the frenzy of its joy, Conciliation Hall declared that “The Liberator

had driven the ear of Repeal through the Monster Indictment."

Darker skies were gathering over O'Connell. The pacific tenor of his agitations had thwarted the Government. The magic of his name had prevented any overt act of violence by vast assemblies of his excited countrymen. But his coadjutors had, for the most part, little sympathy with their leader's policy in making the repeal agitation a stepping-stone to more substantial and practical reforms. Many of them already indulged in vague dreams of a revolution, an Irish republic, and the like fancied blessings, which have proved in so many cases the bar to all gradual but real practical reforms. They accordingly became impatient of delay, assumed a defiant tone, and demanded that the non-resistant doctrines of O'Connell be repudiated by the National Repeal Association. Then arose "Young Ireland," followed by strife and division—one party clinging to, the other separating from, the great leader. The alienation of large numbers of his friends, overtaking him when his powers were impaired by years of exhausting toil, broke the spirit of the old man, undermined his constitution, and compelled him to repair to the continent to resuscitate his waning health and drooping heart. But he left the field of exertion too late. His energies rapidly declined; death overtook him while on his weary pilgrimage; his eye saw the sun for the last time in a foreign sky; and he slept his final sleep far from the land which gave him birth, and from that ocean by whose side his cradle was rocked. The stroke that felled him to the earth sent a pang through many a heart in every country where humanity has a dwelling-place; for his sympathies, like his reputation, were world-wide. He had helped to deliver his own countrymen from their bonds, and had pled for the victims of an inhuman traffic on the shores of Africa, for the swarthy serfs on the banks of the Ganges, for the persecuted Jews of ancient Damascus, and for the stricken slaves in the isles of the Caribbean Sea and in the distant States of America.

In respect to Mr. O'Connell's general course as a public

man, it may be said that he did not belong to the purest school of politicians. He was not exempt from trick and artifice in attaining his ends, and was lavish in promising to do for his followers what he must have known he could not perform. Indeed, he was something of a demagogue. In honesty of purpose, he ranks with the better class of great public leaders; and if this be not saying much, it is more than can be uttered of the whole body. He is a rare man who is worthy to be ranked among the exceptions to bad general rules. The objects to which he devoted his political life were among the noblest that can move the hearts of men; and it must not be overlooked that his whole policy was adapted to the character of the people he had to deal with; though it will not be denied that he would have been far more worthy of our admiration had he never employed questionable means to secure even such ends.

It only remains that I refer to his personal, social, and mental characteristics. Mr. O'Connell had a massive frame, capable of enduring great fatigue, and he was one of the most industrious and laborious of men. His manners were cordial and frank; his social qualities genial and winning; and he was singularly affectionate as a husband and a father. It was only in the fierce conflicts of partisan strife, when challenged by some strong provocation, that the unlovely and almost vindictive traits of his nature were displayed. Then, the man who, an hour before, had been all gentleness and good humour—caressing his grandchildren with womanly fervour, or, in his seat in the Commons, affectionately holding the hand of his son for a half hour together—now opened that terrible battery of invective which he so well knew how to employ, and covered his foe with a storm of vituperation.

He possessed a mind of uncommon native vigour, trained by a complete education, and enlarged with a knowledge of men and things varied and ample. The versatility of his genius, his extensive information, and his capacity to adapt himself to the matter under discussion, or the audience before him, were surprising. I have heard him exhaust topics

that required for their elucidation an intimate acquaintance with the Constitution of the United States, with the condition of barbarous tribes in the interior of Africa, with the wrongs inflicted by the East India Company upon the dwellers in Hindostan, with the commercial tariffs of European nations, with the persecution of the Jews in Asia, with the causes of the opium war in China, with the relative rights of planters and labourers in the Western Archipelago—and he was at home in each. I have seen him hold the House of Commons spell-bound, call forth shouts from intelligent and philanthropic British audiences in Exeter Hall, lash into fury or hush into repose acres of wild peasantry gathered on the moors of Ireland—and he was at home with each.

As a popular orator, before mixed assemblies, our age has rarely seen his equal. Every chord of the human bosom lay open to his touch, and he played upon its passions and emotions with a master's hand. He could subdue his hearers to tears by his pathos, or toss them with laughter by his humour. His imagination could bear them to a giddy height on its elastic wing, or he could enchain their judgment by the force of his keen logic. He could blanch their cheek as he painted before their eyes some atrocity red with blood, or he could make them hold their sides as he related some broad Irish anecdote fresh from Cork. He used to say he was the best-abused man in Europe. But he was able to liquidate all such scores with most usurious interest. He could excoriate an antagonist with invective, or roast him alive before a slow fire of sarcasm. When his indignation was fully roused, he was like a boiling volcano; yet there was no excess of action or noise, but an eruption whose lava consumed all before it. His recital of facts charmed like a romance, and his appeals to the sympathies, uttered in a musical voice, not untinged with the brogue of his native island, were tender and subduing.

No actor ever excelled him in reflecting the workings of the mind through the windows of the countenance. He looked every sentiment as it fell from his lips. His ges-

ticulation was redundant, never commonplace, strictly *sui generis*, far from being awkward, not precisely graceful ; and yet it could hardly have been more forcible, and, so to speak, illustrative. He threw himself into a great variety of attitudes, all evidently unpremeditated. Now he stood bolt upright like a grenadier. Then he assumed the port and bearing of a pugilist. Now he folded his arms upon his breast, uttered some beautiful sentiment, relaxed them, receded a step, and gave wing to the coruscations of his fancy, while a winning smile played over his countenance. Then he "stood at ease," and related an anecdote with the rollicking air of a horse-jockey at Donnybrook Fair. Quick as thought his indignation seemed to kindle ; before speaking a word, he would make a violent, yet seemingly involuntary sweep with his arm, seize his wig as if he would tear it in pieces, and then advancing and throwing his body into the attitude of a gladiator, he would pour out a flood of eloquent rebuke and denunciation.

Like most other rare men who have acted conspicuous parts in turbulent times, he had great faults, eminent virtues, crowds of enemies, troops of friends. His flatterers have rarely called him a statesman. In truth, he was neither a good statesman nor a bad statesman, but simply a bold and generally successful political agitator. He grappled with questions that shook empires ; led the van in many a contest against despotism ; and was indebted in no small degree for his victories to the rottenness of the institutions he assailed. All right-minded and liberal-hearted men will ascribe his defects partly to the evil times in which he lived, partly to a hasty temper and an indomitable pride of opinion, while to a large extent they will be attributed to a generous and impulsive nature, impatient of unmeasured abuse and unreasonable opposition. Impartial history will record that his fury was usually poured out on the heads of meanness, fraud, injustice, and oppression ; and that wherever Humanity writhed under the heel of Tyranny, there were found the glowing heart and trumpet voice of Daniel O'Connell, sympathizing with the victim and rebuking the tyrant.

CHAPTER XXI.

Cheap Postage—Rowland Hill—His Plan Proposed in 1837—Comparison of the Old and New Systems—Money-Orders, Stamps, and Envelopes—The Free Delivery—London District Post—Mr. Hume—Unjust Treatment of Mr. Hill by the Government—The National Testimonial.

A SKETCH of recent British Reforms, even as imperfect as that I am attempting, would be defective without some notice of one of the greatest blessings of the age—CHEAP POSTAGE. Not only Britain, but Europe and America (for both have already largely partaken of its benefits), are indebted to MR. ROWLAND HILL for this measure of human improvement and enjoyment. There are two aspects in which to contemplate this reform. The one, its vast social, political, commercial, and moral advantages; the other, its tables of figures. The former may be called the poetic, the latter the mathematical, view. I shall avoid both of these extremes.

The high rates of British postage, down to 1840, which were adjusted much on the same scale as those of America, were a dead weight on correspondence. For thirty years previous to that time, the gross receipts of the post-office had remained nearly stationary. Thus, the amount of correspondence by mail continued about the same during a period in which the population of the country increased fifty per cent., commerce and wealth in a nearly equal proportion, and knowledge among the masses, and the facilities of transmission, to even a larger degree. These facts arrested the attention of many minds. But the sagacious Rowland Hill probed to causes and devised remedies. He published his scheme for postal reform in 1837. Its outlines were these:—The controlling idea of the post-office establishment should be, the convenience of the people, and not Government revenue. It was extortionate for the Government to tax as much for carrying a letter from London to Edinburgh,

as a merchant charged for transporting a barrel of flour. The chief labour being expended in making up, opening, and delivering mails, therefore the fact, whether a letter was carried one mile or one hundred miles made comparatively little difference in the expenditure of the department. The weight, and not the number of pieces of which a letter was composed, should regulate the rate of postage charged. As much postage was lost on letters which were never called for, therefore there should be a distinction between prepaid letters and others; and in large towns there should be a free distribution of prepaid letters by postmen. And finally, there should be no privileged class, with permission to use the post-office free of charge. Guided by these principles, Mr. Hill recommended a uniform rate of postage for all distances—a postage of a penny per half ounce, on letters, if prepaid, irrespective of the number of pieces, and twopence if not paid till delivered, the rate increasing as the weight advanced; a free delivery of prepaid letters in large towns, and total abolition of the franking privilege. His scheme embraced great improvements in other respects, such as envelopes, stamps, post-office money-orders, &c. He also insisted, that the increase in the number of letters under his scheme would be sufficient in a few years to carry the net income as high as under the old system.

Now, all this seems very simple and plain—so simple and plain, that those who hourly enjoy its benefits never think of the times when it absorbed a day's wages of a poor Irish labourer in London to send a letter to his wife in Cork, informing her that he was well, and hoping these few lines would find her enjoying the same blessing—when a commercial house in Liverpool paid a yearly tax to the post-office sufficient to discharge the salaries of its clerks—when an editor, happening to be absent from the metropolis, wrote his leaders to avoid triple postage, on very thin folio post, with very close lines, to the great disgust and vexation of compositors and proof readers—when love-letters and money letters were peered into by gossiping postmasters, to see whether they were double—when a manufacturer, who could send a

ream of paper a hundred miles for sixpence if it went in the coach box, must pay a shilling per sheet if it went in the coach bag—when a luckless neighbour, about to take a journey of business or pleasure, must conceal his departure to the last moment, or be laden with a portmanteau full of letters, to “save postage”—when—but there is no end to the absurdities, annoyances, and extortions which pertained to the old system. And who thanks the genius and perseverance of Rowland Hill for exposing and exploding this relic of antiquated times, and introducing a reform worthy of the noon of steamers, railways, and electric telegraphs? It is so simple! Columbus is almost as sure of immortality for teaching a bevy of courtly buffoons how to make an egg stand on end, as for giving a new world to Ferdinand and Isabella. It looked very simple—especially *after it was done*. So did the discovery of the magnetic needle and the New World. It is the capacity which conceives how simple things, which produce great results, can be done, that is entitled to be called genius. Nor was the working out of all its practical details either a simple or an easy matter. It is no slight merit to have both conceived the original idea, and overcome all the practical difficulties which impeded its execution. He is both a genius and a practical man who can first conceive and then execute. And such a man is Rowland Hill.

His pamphlet of 1837 soon attracted the attention of the nation. The next year several hundred petitions in favour of his plan were presented to Parliament—a select committee was appointed to collect facts—a hundred witnesses were examined—and a report, embodying a great variety of important information, was published, filling three volumes of the Parliamentary papers. After much deliberation, his scheme, having suffered some modifications and mutilation, was adopted in 1839, to take effect early in 1840. In its actual workings, though crippled by half-hearted officials, it has exceeded the expectations of almost everybody except its sagacious originator, working out during nine years, before millions of eyes, the problems he solved sixteen years ago in his closet.

In 1839, the last year of the old system, the letters passing through the British post-office numbered about eighty millions. The average postage was sevenpence per letter. The first year of the new system the number reached one hundred and seventy millions. It steadily advanced, till, in 1848, it had risen to three hundred and fifty millions. The gross receipts of the department in the latter year about equalled those of 1839. The net income of 1839 was about a million and a half sterling; that of 1848 about three-fourths of a million. The increased expense and consequent diminution of net revenue under the new system are owing to the increase of business on old post routes, the opening of new routes, and great improvement on both. The net revenue increased from 1840 to 1848, a period of eight years, one-fourth of a million. Hence, it is safe to presume, that in a few years more it will equal that of 1839. What a demonstration have we here of the much controverted proposition which has been carried out of late years with such happy practical results in so many other departments of revenue and taxation, that a great diminution in the cost of that which the public needs will so increase consumption, that revenue will not be the loser, while convenience will vastly gain. But, discard the principle of revenue, and make the post-office simply support itself, and England might probably in a few years reduce the rate of postage one-half, while transmitting a mass of letters which would almost defy enumeration. This more than realizes the brightest visions of Mr. Hill.

But the money view of this great reform is a secondary question. It is well said by Mr. Joshua Leavitt, in an admirable American pamphlet on Cheap Postage: "The people of England expend now as much money for postage as they did under the old system; but the advantage is, that they get a great deal more service for their money, and it gives a spring to business, trade, science, literature, philanthropy, social affection, and all plans of public utility." Already its fruits are apparent. Probably the corn laws were repealed two years sooner because of cheap postage.

Nothing can exceed the convenience of the money-order, the stamp, and the envelope branches of the system. The money-orders are drafts by one post-office upon another, for sums not exceeding £5, and frequently for only a few shillings. They are a sort of post-office bill of exchange, and are largely employed in the transmission of small sums by mail. In 1847 the number issued in England alone was \$10,000, amounting to £1,654,000. The department charges a trifling commission for the order. In a country where the brokers are Jews, and the smallest Bank of England notes are £5, this arrangement is very beneficial to the poor. The label stamps, which prepay letters, are convenient to all classes. They are of all rates, and being first prepared by the department, are kept on sale, not only at all the post-offices, but by shopkeepers of all sorts. They are used, not only to pay postage, but frequently serve as small change. Indeed, they are employed as a kind of circulating medium. The number sold in a year is counted by millions. The envelopes, stamped by the department, and sold like simple stamps, are used not only to enclose letters, but by all sorts of persons and associations, for circulars, advertisements, &c., these being printed on the inside of the envelopes after they are stamped. The great majority of letters are prepaid, because of the diminution in the rate of postage. *Gentlemen* everywhere pay their own postage when writing on their own business. In England they also enclose a stamp to prepay the answer. Large commercial houses cause their address to be printed on stamped envelopes, and then send packages of these to their correspondents to be used when needed.

The free delivery of prepaid letters in the large towns is astonishingly perfect. Almost a stranger among the two millions of London, I once received a letter at my lodgings, from a correspondent to whom my city address was unknown, in three hours after its arrival at the post-office. The postman, when I was in London three months before, had delivered letters to my address, and he now recollects the name and number. Besides the "General Post," which

delivers letters coming from the country and foreign parts, there is connected with the department in London, a machine of curious contrivance, and great exploits, called the "District Post." It covers a circle of some twelve miles, from the centre, and delivers letters which originate and end within the circle, ten times a day, at dwellings, shops, and offices. In 1848, the number delivered by this post was nearly fifty millions. To these must be added at least a hundred and twenty millions for the General Post, making an aggregate of a hundred and seventy millions of letters delivered in London annually, by the post-office department, a large proportion of which, being prepaid, are delivered free.

The committee, when presenting to Mr. Hill, in 1846, the National Testimonial, had ample grounds for pronouncing his reform "a measure which has opened the blessings of a free correspondence to the teacher of religion, the man of science and literature, the merchant and trader, and the whole British nation, especially the poorest and most defenceless portion of it—a measure which is the greatest boon conferred in modern times on all the social interests of the civilized world." The veteran reformer, Joseph Hume, in a letter to Mr. Bancroft, then the American minister at St. James's, dated in 1848, says : "I am not aware of any reform, amongst the many reforms I have promoted during the last forty years, that has had, and will have, better results toward the improvement of this country, morally, socially, and commercially."

And how has the benefactor of a great and powerful nation been treated by the British Government? He has shared the general fate of useful inventors and reformers. At the outset he was ridiculed as a dreamer, an enthusiast. After a conviction of the utility of his plan had penetrated the masses of the people, Parliament mutilated it, supplying the excised parts with uncongenial inventions of its own. When even thus much of his plan was adopted, he was permitted to have but slight influence in working it out in practice. He should have been appointed Postmaster-

General; but liberal Whig though he was, the great reformer was placed, by a Whig administration, in a minor place, where he could exert only a subordinate influence over postal affairs. And after six years of incessant labour and anxiety, on a change of administration, the new Government turned him out, though he entreated the Premier to allow him, at any pecuniary sacrifice to himself, to remain and aid in working out his plan. But the people have fully appreciated his services, and after some hesitation as to the best mode of testifying their gratitude, a national subscription in his behalf was started, the net proceeds of which amounted to £13,360. It was presented to him, in 1846, at a public dinner, with appropriate expressions of gratitude. The reply of Mr. Hill was modest. He gave ample credit for the aid he had received from others in carrying his plan through Parliament, and specially named Messrs. Wallace and Warburton, members of the committee of 1838, Mr. Baring, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Lords Ashburton and Brougham. He delicately alluded to his proscription by the Peel administration, and pointed out the improvements necessary to give complete efficiency to his reform.

Thirteen thousand pounds, for devising and introducing a measure which has carried blessings to every princely mansion and peasant cabin in three kingdoms! Doubtless it was an inadequate gift, if it is to be assumed as a full requital for his services; but no one who bore any part in it viewed it in this light, but solely as a testimonial expressive of the high estimate they placed on the great boon which the country owed to his genius and persevering labours. Added to this, he has the sense of a victory achieved, which, to such a mind, is no inadequate reward; and if his contemporaries do not fully requite his services, posterity will do justice to his memory.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Corn Laws—Their Character and Policy—Origin of the Anti-Corn Law Movement—Adam Smith—Richard Cobden—"Anti-Corn Law Parliament"—Mr. Villiers' Motion in the House of Commons in 1839—Formation of the League—Power of the Landlords—Lord John Russell's Motion in 1841—General Election of that Year—Mr. Cobden Returned to Parliament—Peel in Power—His Modification of the Corn Laws—Great Activity and Steady Progress of the League during the Years 1842–1845—Session of 1846—Sir Robert Peel and the Duke of Wellington—Repeal of the Corn Laws.

Few practical questions in relation to English policy have excited greater interest of late years than that which involves the expediency of protecting native agriculture by imposing high duties on foreign grain, and thus securing to the British farmer a monopoly of the home market, except when prices rise so high in years of scarcity as to admit of a profit even with the high protective duties; or the opposite plan of removing all restrictions to open competition, and purchasing the cheapest grain wherever it can be had. Lord Stanley, in defending the old system, said that the principle of landlord protection had existed in England for eight centuries. In 1774, the corn laws received the impress which they retained till their repeal in 1846. They were revised in 1791, in 1804, in 1815, and in 1828. The revisions of 1815 and 1828 produced the system more generally known as the corn laws. The object of the system was to afford as complete a monopoly in breadstuffs to the home agriculturists as possible, and yet allow the introduction of foreign grain whenever a bad harvest, or other causes, produced a scarcity of food. At every revision, down to that of 1828, the duties were made more and more protective. The price to which wheat (for instance) must rise ere it could come in from abroad, at a nominal duty, was fixed in 1774 at 48s. per quarter; in 1791, at 54s.; in 1804, at 60s.; and in 1815, at 80s.—the quarter being eight

bushels. The liberal policy of Mr. Huskisson slightly prevailed in 1828, and the maximum price was fixed at 73s.

The system was a compromise between protection and starvation, the umpire being a "*sliding scale*" of duties. By this scale, the duties fell as the prices rose, and rose as the prices fell. The act of 1828 had 20 or 30 degrees in its scale, three or four of which are given as illustrations. When the average price of wheat in the kingdom was 52s. per quarter, the duty on foreign wheat was 34s. 8d. When the price reached 60s., the duty fell to 26s. 8d. When the price rose to 70s., the duty sunk to 10s. 8d. When the price attained 73s. and upward, the duty went down to 1s. The average which regulated the duty was ascertained as follows:—The prices of grain (wheat, for instance) on Saturday of each week, at 150 of the principal markets in the kingdom, were ascertained by returns to the Exchequer, and these were averaged. To this average those of the five preceding weeks were added, and then "the general average" of the whole six was struck; and this, on each Thursday, was proclaimed by the Government as the price for the regulation of the duty for one week. Wheat, flour, &c., from abroad, might be stored or "*bonded*," without paying duties, to await a favourable turn of the market, and then to be entered or re-exported at pleasure.

The act of 1828, after being modified in 1842, was totally repealed in 1846—the totality to take effect in February 1849. During the seven years immediately preceding the repeal, matter sufficient to fill a thousand quarto volumes was printed in Great Britain on the Corn Laws. I shall not touch this mass, but confine myself to a notice of the movement typified by the name of Richard Cobden.

The history of Voluntary Associations does not furnish a triumph more signal than that achieved by the Anti-Corn Law League. In seven years it revolutionized the mind of the most intelligent nation of Europe, bent to its will the proudest legislative assembly in the world, and overthrew a system rooted to the earth by the steady growth and fos-

tering culture of centuries. It may not be uninteresting to trace the rise and progress of such an association.

From the days of Adam Smith downward, a school of political economists have contended that free trade is the high commercial road to national wealth. This was a favourite doctrine with the brilliant coterie whose opinions were reflected by the Edinburgh Review, and it mingled in the discussions upon "national distress," with which Parliament so frequently resounded from the breaking out of the French Revolution to the passage of the Reform Bill. But the landlords long proved too strong for the schoolmen. The beginning of 1837 saw a fearful commercial collapse in England, which was aggravated by a deficient harvest in the ensuing summer. The summer of 1838 brought in its train another deficient harvest, which plunged the country deeper into suffering and gloom. Many sagacious minds regarded the corn laws as a fruitful source of these disasters. In September, Dr. Bowring and Colonel Thompson, two distinguished advocates of the principles of Bentham, started the Anti-Corn Law crusade, by forming, in a small meeting at Manchester, an Anti-Corn Law Association. Shortly after, a large assembly of the merchants and manufacturers of that town, in which Mr. Cobden bore a leading part, resolved to aid the Association with £3000. In December, the Manchester Chamber of Commerce adopted a petition to Parliament, praying for an immediate and total repeal of the laws. Thus encouraged, the Association convened a meeting of delegates from all parts of the kingdom, at Manchester, in January 1839. This body empowered the Association to assemble a meeting of deputies in London at the opening of the approaching session of Parliament. They met in February, and petitioned the House of Commons for leave to present evidence at its bar in regard to the injurious effects of the corn laws, and selected Mr. Villiers to bring forward a motion to that end. It was negatived with contempt, and the delegates separated. A month elapsed, and they again met at Brown's Hotel, in Palace Yard—the Protectionists, in derision, giving them

the name of “The Anti-Corn Law Parliament”—a name which they at once adopted, and which they ultimately taught the landlords to fear, if not respect. Their organ, Mr. Villiers, moved that the Commons take into consideration the acts regulating the importation of foreign corn. He spoke in defence of his motion amidst coughings and hootings, when a large majority of members, shouting “Divide! divide!” rushed into the lobbies, silencing for the moment the demand for cheap bread. They had yet to learn the character of the men they were dealing with.

On the motion of Mr. Cobden, the Palace Yard Convention now organized “THE NATIONAL ANTI-CORN LAW LEAGUE,” with a Central Council, to be located at Manchester. In that hour the landlords of Great Britain insolently boasted of their ability to cope with all the other property-holders of the kingdom combined. There was cause for their boasting. Their possessions were vast, their union was perfect, their power hitherto irresistible. During a period of fifty-five years, the number of landowners in the realm had greatly diminished. In 1774, when Mr. Burke’s corn law was enacted, the estimated number was 240,000 in England proper. In 1839, 40,000 persons, acting together, with the unity and efficiency of a close corporation, owned the agricultural soil of England. With this monopoly the League joined issue. Richard Cobden, in the name of Free Trade, threw his gauntlet in the face of Protection, and challenged the feudalists to trial by battle before the people of the three kingdoms. The struggle was one of the severest, the victory one of the completest, of the present century.

The leading principles maintained by the League were, that the corn laws were not beneficial to the whole body of agriculturists, but only to a privileged few; that they depressed other branches of industry; caused frequent and ruinous fluctuations in the market value of breadstuffs, greatly enhanced the price at all times, and, therefore, were injurious to the community generally, and especially to the labouring poor. The promulgation of these principles excited a discussion of the broader question of the rela-

tive merits of Protection and Free Trade in their widest aspects.

The League entered so vigorously into the contest, that, by the close of the year 1839, upwards of one hundred important towns had formed kindred associations. In 1840, Manchester, which bore so conspicuous a part in originating the movement, commenced the series of large Free Trade meetings which made that town famous in the corn law struggle. In January, a public dinner was spread for the friends of the League, under a huge pavilion, at which 4000 persons sat down. The next day, 5000 operatives were feasted. In February, at the opening of Parliament, the "Anti-Corn Law Parliament" met in London. Mr. Villiers renewed the motion of the previous year, and was defeated. In March, the Corn Law delegates again assembled; Mr. Villiers brought forward his motion, and was again defeated. The delegates returned home to arouse their constituents. The cry for "cheap bread" reverberated through the summer from Pentland Frith to Eddystone Light—from the Giant's Causeway to the Cove of Cork. Palace Yard again swarmed with delegates in November, and the persevering Villiers again moved, spoke, and was defeated. But the warm agitations of the League were gradually ripening public opinion. Early in the session of 1841, Lord John Russell, foreseeing the necessity of a dissolution of Parliament or a dissolution of the Ministry, resolved on the former; gave notice of his motion for the abandonment of the sliding scale, and for a fixed duty of 8s. per quarter on imported wheat, hoping, by such a proposition, to originate a popular measure with which to rally the country. He made an able speech, closed the doors of St. Stephen's, and opened the campaign for a new House of Commons.

The Tories swept the kingdom, the landed interests being everywhere thoroughly alarmed at the threatened innovation on their exclusive privileges, the Whigs falling between the "totality" of the Leaguers and the "finality" of the Protectionists. Lord John faced the new Parliament; his motion was defeated, and Sir Robert Peel, after an

exclusion of eleven years, returned to power. But though the landlords gave the Queen a sliding-scale House of Commons, the operatives of Stockport gave the people "a fixed fact" in the person of Richard Cobden. And now, said the Conservative landholders, Cobden will find his level. He may sway a turbulent mob of Manchester artizans, but he will learn the difference between such popular audiences and the aristocracy of England. Little did they dream, in this hour of their exultation, that in four years and a half the Manchester calico-printer would convert the Premier to his views, who, carrying over half the Tories to the League, would give victory to its standard, generously saying, as he retired with grace and dignity from the field, "Not to the Tory party nor to the Whig party, not to myself, nor to the noble lord at the head of the Opposition, is this change to be attributed; but the people of this country are indebted for this great measure of relief to the rare combination of elements which centre in the mind and heart of Richard Cobden."

To return from this digression. The session of 1842 was opened at a period of unexampled distress in the manufacturing districts. Sir Robert Peel proposed a modification of the corn laws, which considerably reduced the duties. Mr. Villiers met the Government with a motion that the laws ought immediately to cease and determine. During the debate, Sir Robert announced that he would not pledge himself to a permanent maintenance of the sliding scale, and he distinctly abandoned the principle of Protection as mere protection. This foreshadowed the events of 1846. Cobden's lucid speeches in defence of the motion won him a high place in the House. Villiers was defeated by a large majority, and the Government measure adopted.

Near the close of the year, the League proposed to raise £50,000, and deputed Messrs. Cobden, Bright, Colonel Thompson, and others, to traverse the country and address the people. The great Free-Trade Hall was built at Manchester, and at its opening in January 1843, it was announced that £44,000 had been raised. An attack was next

made on London. After filling first the Crown and Anchor, and then Freemasons' Hall, the League was invited by Mr. Maeready to occupy Drury Lane Theatre. Night after night, that spacious building was more densely packed, and rung with louder cheers, than in the days when Edmund Kean burst upon the metropolis, and carried it with a whirlwind of excitement. Thus far, the meetings of the League had been held in towns and cities. Mr. Cobden now challenged the monopolists to meet the Free-Traders on their chosen ground. He attended open meetings of agriculturists in thirty-two counties, encountered the advocates of Protection, and with the aid of his associates, defeated them on a show of hands in every case but one.

The year 1844 was opened with a proposal to raise £100,000, and to distribute ten millions of anti-corn law tracts. Manchester Free Trade Hall gave a lead to the country, by subscribing £20,000 at a single meeting. In March Mr. Cobden attacked the landlords in their farm-yards. He moved the Commons for a committee to inquire into the effects of protective duties upon tenant farmers and agricultural labourers. His speech on that occasion, one of the ablest he ever delivered, gave a new aspect to the controversy, and a fresh impulse to the national intellect. And more than all, as was afterwards acknowledged, that speech sunk into the soul of Sir Robert Peel, and prepared the *finale* of the corn laws. During the session, Sir Robert carried through a bill reducing the duties on several important articles; but he did not touch corn. The "pressure from without" was becoming, month by month, more difficult to be resisted. As fast as vacancies in Parliament occurred, they were filled by the candidates of the League. Early in 1845 Sir Robert proposed sweeping financial reforms, repealing the duties on four hundred and fifty articles, reducing the duty on the important article of sugar, and otherwise modifying the tariff. The corn laws still remained inviolate, but the landlords began to be alarmed. The panic was not diminished when the League placed its choicest orators on the stage of Covent Garden. For weeks that theatre was

crowded from pit to gallery, with audiences more earnest and enthusiastic than the muse of Shakspeare or the wit of Sheridan could command. Distinguished Parliamentarians, and even Earls and Barons, were swept into the throng, and mingled their voices in the chorus for “cheap bread,” with Cobden, Bright, Fox, and Thompson. The ladies crowned the *fête* by opening a splendid Free Trade bazaar in the theatre, crowding its doors for three weeks with wealth and beauty, and adding £15,000 to the treasury of the League. Ere the autumnal months had passed away, it became evident that Sir Robert Peel’s Government must soon grant repeal, or yield the ghost. A new election was anticipated. “Registration” almost silenced the shout for “Repeal.” Effective measures were taken to place the name of every Free Trade voter on the lists. The close of the year 1845 saw the League busy in raising a fund of £250,000, and marshalling one hundred thousand new electors for the contest.

The session of 1846 opened. The result is known. Sir Robert Peel and the Duke of Wellington—the same men who, seventeen years before, emancipated the Catholics—repealed the corn laws. There could be no higher evidence of the ability and tact of Sir Robert, than that on both these memorable occasions he won the support of the most inflexible of men, without whose aid neither of those measures could have passed the House of Peers. Such acts pour a flood of redeeming sunshine upon the characters of both these men.

The corn laws are dead. The principle of Protection has received its death-blow in England. By mingling the question of corn law repeal with that of protection generally, the discussions of seven years carried the mind of Britain forward a quarter of a century in the direction of Free Trade in all its departments. A permanent revival of the old order of things is no longer hoped for, or even desired, unless by a few superannuated members of the House of Peers, and some half-dozen unyielding old Tories and Quixotic young Hotspurs in the House of Commons. If the

good effected by this great measure has not realized all the promises of its advocates, it has falsified most of the evil predicted by its opponents—being but another proof that public sagacity, warned by the preliminary agitation, foresees changes in existing systems, and gradually prepares to meet them, so that their actual advent heralds neither all the blessings anticipated by their friends; nor all the disasters prophesied by their enemies.

It is undoubtedly true that this corn law contest had its origin in the conflicting interests of two classes of monopolists, the manufacturers and the landlords. But the turn which the conflict finally took made it a battle between Free Trade and Protection, and the victory redounded to the advantage of the former. Other monopolies will no doubt be overthrown in their turn. A great maritime monopoly has already shared the fate of the landlord monopoly, in the recent repeal of the Navigation Laws.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Notice of Corn-Law Repealers—Mr. Cobden—Mr. Bright—Colonel Thompson—Mr. Villiers—Dr. Bowring—William J. Fox—Ebenezer Elliott—James Montgomery—George Wilson—The Last Meeting of the League.

THE seasonable organization, steady progress, and signal triumph of The National Anti-Corn Law League, are attributable in a very large degree to the sagacity, ability, and courage of RICHARD COBDEN. The early career of one who so suddenly acquired a European reputation is not so familiar as to render uninteresting a few incidents of that part of his life.'

The leader of the Commercial Revolution of England is the son of a poor yeoman of Sussex. Commencing active life as a clerk in a London counting-house, he afterwards removed to Manchester, where he became the travelling

agent of a house largely engaged in the cotton trade. His intelligence, industry, and sound judgment, won him the confidence of his employers, and the respect of all with whom he had intercourse. His rise was rapid, and we soon find him associated with an elder brother in a manufacturing enterprise of their own. He was highly successful. He studied public taste then as shrewdly as he afterwards studied public opinion. An anecdote will illustrate this. In 1837, a gentleman visited his warehouse in Manchester, where he was shown some printed muslins of a peculiarly beautiful pattern, which Mr. Cobden was just sending into the market. A few days afterwards, this gentleman was walking in the vicinity of Goodwood, and met some ladies of the family of the Duke of Richmond wearing these identical prints; and shortly after, while strolling through Windsor Park, he saw the young Queen going down the slopes sporting a new dress of the same pattern. Of course this set all the ladies of the kingdom in a rage after "Cobden's prints," which immediately became as celebrated in the market as did Cobden's speeches a few years afterwards.

But Cobden was never a mere calico-printer. In his manufacturing days his capacious mind embraced large views of finance and trade. In 1835, he published, under the signature of "A Manchester Manufacturer," an able pamphlet on "England, Ireland, and America," and, soon after, another on "Russia," in which he advocated a repeal of the corn laws, free trade, peace, and non-intervention in the politics of other nations, strongly urging that England's true policy was to abolish the agricultural monopoly, open her ports to the world, stick to trade and manufactures, and not meddle with foreign controversies. The information which these pamphlets displayed was rare and valuable, the reasonings cogent, the style forcible, and the sentiments eulogistic of "those free institutions which are favourable to the peace, wealth, education, and happiness of mankind." As an illustration of his thorough mode of sifting a question, it may be stated that, before writing his pamphlet on Russia, he made a tour to the East, expressly to gain information on that subject.

Mr. Cobden had now secured a reputation in Manchester and the surrounding district, and became a leading man in all public movements, especially such as related to business and trade. In 1837 he was invited to contest Stockport for a seat in Parliament. He failed of an election by fifty-five votes. In 1840 he was requested to stand for Manchester; but he declined, because he was expected to support, in all things, the Whig Administration; and being far in advance of it on the subject of Free Trade, he was not the man to put on a chain to win a seat on the Treasury benches of the House of Commons. He was returned for Stockport at the general election the next year, and his biography has since become a part of English history. Of his services in the cause of Free Trade, I have already spoken at some length.

On the second of July 1846, the act repealing the corn laws having received the royal assent, the League held its final meeting at Manchester. All the *elite* of that victorious body had assembled from three kingdoms. George Wilson, who had presided as chairman of the council during the entire struggle, occupied the chair. Having given a rapid sketch of the rise, progress, and triumph of the Association, he requested Mr. Cobden to address the assembly. As he rose, the multitude sprang to its feet, as one man, and greeted him with reiterated rounds of cheers. There stood the brave, the modest leader, victor in a field more glorious than ever Wellington won, unable to utter a word for several minutes, for the rapturous shouts of his companions in arms. His speech was characteristic. He bestowed warm eulogies upon his co-workers in the League, generously complimented Sir Robert Peel and Lord John Russell for their services in the crisis of the conflict, and delicately alluding to his own labours, insisted, in spite of the thundering “noes” which greeted the statement, that far too large a share of credit had been bestowed on him. He closed by moving that the operations of the League be suspended, and the Executive Council requested to wind up its affairs with as little delay as possible. The next day, a modest letter appeared in the public prints, addressed by

him to the electors of Stockport, heartily thanking them for the confidence and kindness with which they had honoured him, and announcing that the state of his health induced him to seek a temporary withdrawal from public life. Then followed the European tour; the feastings and toastings at Genoa, Paris, and other continental cities; the munificent National Testimonial of nearly £20,000; the re-election to Parliament; the plans for financial reform; the motions and speeches on that subject; the defeat; and the girding up of the armour for another struggle.

Those who associate in their fancy great physical endowments with great political achievements, would be disappointed in the person of Mr. Cobden. His name is announced. Forward steps a pale, slender man, with grave features stamped with few of the lineaments usually coupled with greatness and energy, and, with rather a weak voice, and a gesticulation in no wise striking, begins to unfold his subject. But these are the mere superficial accessories. Lucid arrangement; well-selected words; arguments that penetrate to the marrow; facts new and old, clearly presented and felicitously applied; illustrations that shed light without bewildering; an occasional apothegmatic expression, embodying the whole subject in a phrase that enchains the memory; earnestness and sincerity which first enlist sympathy and soon beget conviction—these are the sterling elements of his power as a public speaker. The League furnished half a score of more brilliant orators than he; it produced not another such practical advocate. But, effective as were his forensic abilities, these did not place him at the head of the Anti-Corn Law movement. He was as wise in council as he was resolute in action; and his well-balanced mind, his sturdy common sense, made him proof against the importunities of short-sighted coadjutors, and the snares of long-headed antagonists. A radical reformer without rashness, a leader without arrogance, he carried onward to victory a constantly increasing host, seldom committing a blunder, or sustaining an unnecessary reverse during a long conflict of peculiar excitement and temptation.

Next to Mr. Cobden in popular estimation, among the League champions, stood the sturdy Quaker, JOHN BRIGHT. He entered Parliament in 1843, and, like Cobden, was from the manufacturing class. For some years he had been distinguished among the anti-rate paying Dissenters of Central and Northern England. He had opposed Church rates, and other ecclesiastical exactions, which have always been refused by the members of the Society of Friends, and are yearly becoming more irksome to the great body of English Dissenters. He had also successfully resisted the extortions of some persecuting agents of the Establishment, and subjected them, on two or three occasions, to mortifying defeats. He brought into Parliament a reputation as a prominent advocate of the Corn Law League before popular assemblies, and an intimate knowledge of the subject of Protection and Free Trade. His ready, bold, style of oratory partook more of the fervour of the platform than the calmness of the forum. But shrewdness and tact soon enabled him to catch the key-note of the House, where he displayed skill and courage as one of the champions of the League, and won as much popularity from the aristocratic sections as so radical a reformer could reasonably expect.

Colonel PERRONET THOMPSON, a liberal of the old school, was an efficient member of the League. The incidents of his life would furnish materials for a dozen novels. He had served and commanded, both in the navy and army, in two hemispheres, going through storm and flame in contests with Frenchmen in the Peninsula, South Americans at Buenos Ayres, slave-traders on the coast of Africa, Arabs around the Persian Gulf, and Hindoos among the sources of the Ganges. In the midst of moving accidents by flood and field, he mastered the French, Spanish, and Arabic languages, wrote pamphlets on law and morals, studied the works of Jeremy Bentham, and negotiated commercial treaties, one of which is remarkable for being the first public act that declared the slave trade piracy. Retiring on half pay in 1824, he turned his attention exclusively to politics and literature. He gave full scope to his democratic

tendencies, and became a leader among the radical reformers. For ten years he wrote many of the ablest papers on current public questions that appeared in the Westminster Review, of which journal he was for some time the joint editor and proprietor with Dr. Bowring. His style is remarkable for its originality and vigour, combining pith, raciness, and a frank soldier-like liberality. His speeches are distinguished for the same sententious and suggestive qualities that mark his writings. I am tempted to quote, though I spoil it by mutilation, his definition of a radical. "What," asks the Colonel, "*is* a radical? One that has got the root of the matter in him. One that knows his ills, and goes to work the right way to remove them. Every man is a radical that shuts his mouth to keep out flies. Does any man go to a doctor, and ask for a cure that is not radical? All men have been radicals who ever did any good since the world began." He then goes on to refer to the straightforward means adopted by all men, from Adam's time to our own, to accomplish what they really desired; and selecting the example of Noah when preparing for the deluge, he says: "An antediluvian Whig would have laid half a dozen sticks together for an ark, and called it a virtual representation!" Colonel Thompson had high claims—a pre-emption title—to the position he occupied in the corn law struggle; for, twelve years before that controversy begun, he wrote "*The Catechism of the Corn Laws*," which contained the substance of all that was subsequently elaborated by Cobden and his coadjutors.

Mr. VILLIERS was the Free Trade leader in Parliament till Cobden appeared; and, indeed, on account of his early services, he was called by courtesy the leader until the victory was won. His annual motion for repeal was a thermometer to measure the rise of public opinion; and his annual speech, laden with facts and arguments, converted thousands beyond the walls, if it failed to win majorities within. The multifarious learning and diligent pen of Dr. BOWRING were often in requisition. A disciple of Bentham, an early advocate of Free Trade, acquainted with the com-

mmercial systems of foreign countries beyond most men, with a mind ripened by study and enlarged by extensive travel, he rendered important aid throughout the controversy.

In this summary I must not omit ELLIOTT, the iron poet of Sheffield. Like the Ayrshire ploughman, he sprung from the working class. Like him, his songs are the lays of labour. But, unlike him, his muse did not draw her inspiration from the breath of the open fields, perfumed with daisies, and adorned with hawthorn, but from the hot atmosphere of furnaces, ringing with the clang of anvils, and the hoarse grating of machinery. Burns was the bard of yeomen. Elliott is the bard of artisans. Both have touched the deepest chords of human feeling, though it would be unwise to attempt to claim for the Sheffield poet an equality with the Scottish peasant bard. Wandering a few years ago in the suburbs of Sheffield, my eye fell upon a building, blackened with the blackest smoke of that most sombre town, whose front showed a sign running thus: "*Elliott & Co.'s Iron and Steel Warehouse.*" I inquired of a young man, dressed in a frock, besmeared with iron and coal, for the head of the establishment. "My father," said he, "is just gone. You will find him at his house yonder." I repaired thither. The "Corn Law Rhymer" stood on the threshold in his stockinginged feet, holding a pair of coarse shoes in his hand. His frank "walk in" assured me I was welcome. I had just left the residence of MONTGOMERY. The transition could hardly be greater than from James Montgomery to Ebenezer Elliott. The former was polished in his manners, exquisitely neat in his personal appearance, and his bland conversation never rose above a calm level except once, when he spoke with an indignation that years had not abated of his repeated imprisonment in York Castle, for the publication, first in verse, and then in prose, of liberal and humane sentiments, which offended the Government. And now I was confronted with a burly ironmonger, rapid in speech, glowing with enthusiasm, putting and answering a dozen questions at a breath, eulogizing American institutions, and denouncing British aristocracy, throwing sarcasms at the Duke of Wellington,

and anointing General Jackson with the oil of flattery, pouring out a flood of racy talk about church establishments, Biddle and the bank, poetry, politics, the price of iron and the price of corn, while ever and anon he thrust his damp feet into the embers, and hung his wet shoes on the grate to dry. A much shorter interview than I enjoyed would be sufficient to prove, even if their works were forgotten, that of the two Sheffield poets, Elliott's grasp of intellect was the stronger, his genius the more buoyant and elastic. Yet has the milder bard done and suffered much for civil and religious liberty. But the stronger!—not corn law repealers only, but all Britons who moisten their scanty bread with the sweat of the brow, are largely indebted to his inspiring lays for the mighty bound which the labouring mind of England has taken in our day. Some of his poems are among the rare gems of true natural inspiration. Others are as rugged, ay, and as strong, as the iron bars in his own warehouse. They break out in denunciations of privileged tyrants and titled extortioners, with sounds like the echoes of a Hebrew prophet. The genius that animates, and the humanity that warms every line, carry them where more fastidious and frigid productions would never find their way. Elliott has been called harsh and vindictive, but it was the nature of his subject that gave this character to his verse. Against meanness and oppression his muse has rung out battlesongs, charged with indignation, defiance, sarcasm, and contempt; but into the ears of the lowly and wan sons of toil, it has breathed the sweetest murmurs of sympathy, consolation, and hope. The key which unlocks his harmony he has furnished in these angry lines:—

"For thee, my country, thee, do I perform,
Sternly, the duty of a man born free,
Heedless, though ass, and wolf, and venom'd worm,
Shake ears and fangs, with brandished bray, at me."

It is impossible even to name a tithe of the men of might and genius whose public services gave energy to this conflict, and splendour to this victory. Behind these stood a host, whose less conspicuous, but not less efficient labours,

gave aim to that conflict and certainty to that victory. Three might be mentioned with distinction, Mr. PAULTON, the able editor of *The League* newspaper, who was one of the earliest actors in the enterprise, and weekly sent forth from his closet, arguments which, when reiterated by eloquent tongues on the rostrum, made the land echo the cry of "Cheap Bread;" and Mr. GEORGE WILSON, who officiated as chairman of the League from its creation to its extinction. It appears from the official records of the League, that during the seven years of its existence, Mr. Wilson, whose labours and services were altogether gratuitous, had attended its meetings one thousand three hundred and sixty-one times; and while he had never received one penny for his labour, he had been one of the most generous contributors to its funds. Mr. ARCHIBALD PRENTICE, editor of the *Manchester Times*, by his paper, his lectures and speeches, and as a member of the council, was not less efficient. No member of the League made more sacrifices or efforts to secure the triumph.

CHAPTER XXIV.

National Debt of Great Britain—Lavish Expenditures of the Government—Its enormous taxes—Will the Debt be repudiated?—Will it occasion a Revolution?—Plan of Mr. Ricardo to pay the Debt—Mr. Hume's efforts at Retrenchment.

GREAT BRITAIN is the richest and poorest nation of modern times. Her sea-sweeping commerce, her varied and vast manufactures, her fertile agriculture, the millions which flow into her coffers from her colonial possessions, are sufficient, were she free from debt, and her Government economically administered, to make every son and daughter prosperous. But her huge national debt, and her immense annual expenditures, form a serious counterpart to her unequalled wealth, power, and influence. Her debt sits upon the body politic like a nightmare, closing the circulation of the

vital fluids. It might be justly said of her, that while incurring her enormous debts, she maintained the most lavish and expensive government in the world. Though the interest of her public debt impeded the development of the resources of her people, and the army, the navy, the church, and the law, all drained her monetary arteries, she annually threw away immense sums in the shape of pensions and sinecures to soldiers and civilians, to generals, admirals, ex-chancellors, judges, and diplomatists, to decayed nobles and their numerous train of relatives and dependants, and, indeed, to every kind of nondescript claimant who had influence or interest with each successive party in power.

At the accession of William and Mary in 1689, the national debt of Great Britain was £664,000. At the close of the French war in 1763, £138,000,000. At the close of the American war in 1783, £250,000,000. At the commencement of the Continental wars in 1793, £240,000,000. At their close in 1815, £840,000,000. Thus, it cost England £600,000,000 to put down Napoleon and restore the Bourbons. Some £57,000,000 having been paid off during the last thirty years, it now stands at £782,869,382. The population of the United Kingdom, exclusive of the army and navy, on foreign service, is now 27,314,327. Consequently, the average debt of each individual is upwards of £28.

Looking only to the records, the debt is owing to some 300,000 persons. It would seem, then, that 27,000,000 of people are annually taxed to pay the interest on this vast debt to this small number of creditors. The British Government is always laying anchors to windward. Forty years ago, when this debt was rapidly accumulating, it saw that if a revolution should occur, and the issue be made up between the tax-payers and the tax-receivers, the former could easily trample down a class with whom they had no sympathy, and repudiate the debt. Accordingly, it has been the policy of the Government during these forty years to induce the middling and poorer classes to invest money in the public funds, through the medium of savings banks, charitable institutions, and friendly societies. Not long since, there was

found to be standing in the names of the commissioners of those associations some £25,000,000 of the public debt, belonging to about 800,000 individual depositors, and 16,000 associations—the latter representing probably 1,000,000 of people. Thus the debt is actually owing to 2,000,000 of people, three-fourths of whom are of the middling and lower orders of society—the very class that would be likely, if any, to foment a revolution of the Government. So long as this state of things exists, it is safe to presume that the public debt of Great Britain will never be repudiated, even by revolution.

The taxes upon the people long equalled those of any other nation on earth. The annual average of direct tax paid to the government by each man, woman, and child, exceeded £3. It was paid by less than one-fifth of the population, making about £20, on an average, for each tax-payer, rich and poor. According to the exploded policy of the unreformed system of government, nearly the whole, ultimately, came directly or indirectly, from the poorer classes, not in money solely, but in hard work, high rents, mean fare, and low wages. These taxes were levied on land, meats, drinks, glass, malt, soap, spirits, windows, servants, horses, carriages, dogs, newspapers, stamps, &c., to the last syllable of the record of human wants and uses.

Sydney Smith, in the Edinburgh Review, gives a graphic sketch of this all-pervading system of taxation. He says it involves “taxes upon every article which enters into the mouth, or covers the back, or is placed under the foot. Taxes upon everything which is pleasant to see, hear, feel, smell, or taste. Taxes upon warmth, light, and locomotion. Taxes on everything on earth, and in the waters under the earth; on everything which comes from abroad, or is grown at home. Taxes on the raw material; taxes on every fresh value that is added to it by the industry of man. Taxes on the sauce which pampers a man’s appetite, and the drug that restores him to health; on the ermine which decorates the judge, and the rope which hangs the criminal; on the poor man’s salt, and the rich man’s spice; on the brass nails

of the coffin, and the ribbons of the bride. At bed or board, couchant or levant, we must pay. The schoolboy whips his taxed top ; the beardless youth manages his taxed horse with a taxed bridle on a taxed road. The dying Englishman pours his medicine, which has paid 7 per cent., into a spoon which has paid 15 per cent.; flings himself back upon his chintz bed, which has paid 22 per cent.; makes his will on an eight-pound stamp, and expires in the arms of an apothecary; who has paid a license of a hundred pounds for the privilege of putting him to death. His whole property is, then, immediately taxed from 2 to 10 per cent. Besides the probate, large fees are demanded for burying him in the chancel ; his virtues are handed down to posterity on taxed marble, and he is then gathered to his fathers, to be taxed no more!"

Should the number of public creditors in England become limited to two or three hundred thousand, its enormous debt, its immense annual expenditures, and its corresponding taxation, might become the exciting element in a revolution of its government. Three of the most important political revolutions of modern times are, that of England in 1644, that of America in 1775, and that of France in 1789. Each happened when an attempt was made to levy taxes upon the people, to relieve such burdens upon the national treasury. This grievance is so mixed up with the first demonstrations of revolt, that, from being the mere *occasion* of the outbreak, it has been often, if not generally, regarded as its *cause*. But to assign the resistance to the levying of poundage and ship-money by Charles I., without authority of Parliament—or the refusal to pay a tax on tea and paper by the American colonies, because imposed by a legislature in which they were not represented—or the extraordinary assembling of the States-General of France, by Louis XVI., to supply a treasury exhausted by the foreign wars and domestic profligacies of previous monarchs—to trace primarily to these the mighty convulsions which immediately followed, is to assign as *causes* those *events* which proved that the revolutions had already begun. It is

referring the terrible explosion solely to the spark which ignited the train which a century had been accumulating—is mistaking the cliffs over which the popular torrents fell, for the remote fountains from which they rose. The people were discontented with their Governments—they refused to contribute to their support—coercion drove them to revolt. A people ripe for revolution are apt at making up an issue with their oppressors, and seizing an occasion to smite off their chains; and are quite as likely to avail themselves of an odious tax, which reaches all classes, as of greater outrages, which press only upon single individuals or a limited portion of the community. If England is ever again convulsed with a revolution, it is possible enough that it should be occasioned by excessive taxation. But the great difference between England at the present day, and that England of 1644, or America and France of 1775 and 1789, is, that however bent the people may now be on social and political improvement, and on financial retrenchment, the great mass of them are satisfied that they live under a freer, happier, and more equably balanced government than any other people in the world.

Anxious to avert dangers, as well as to relieve burdens, the great problem which British financiers have set themselves to solve, since the peace of 1815, has been to devise some means of paying off the public debt and reducing taxation. The boldest proposition to this end was brought forward by Mr. RICARDO, a gentleman of the liberal school of politics, and an Edinburgh Reviewer, celebrated for his controversy with Mr. Malthus, the writer on the laws of population and national wealth. For the ten years subsequent to the peace of 1815, the financial embarrassments of England more than once drove her to the borders of national bankruptcy. Mr. Ricardo, then being a member of the Commons, proposed, as the best mode of extricating the kingdom from those embarrassments, to tax its capital and property to the amount of, say £800,000,000, and pay the public debt off at once! He defended this scheme on the two-fold ground of justice and economy, contending that what a debtor owes

ought always to be deducted from his property, and regarded as belonging to his creditors, and therefore should be given to them—that all estimates of the wealth of the debtor, till such deduction and payment are made, are false and delusive—that the then present generation had contracted nearly the whole of the debt, and therefore ought not to entail its payment upon posterity—and that, by immediately discharging the debt, the expense of managing it, and raising the revenue to pay the interest upon it, would be a large saving to the nation. These propositions he maintained with that vigour of reasoning, fulness of detail, and clearness of illustration, for which he was remarkable, and which won him a high place among the politico-economical philosophers of his time. But his scheme fell of its own weight, having few supporters except himself. It was in advance of an age which thought less of paying than of borrowing. But though its author did not convince the Commons of its practicability or expediency, he thoroughly alarmed the capitalists and property-holders of the kingdom.

After many years of labour on the part of Mr. Vansittart, Mr. Robinson, Mr. Peel, Mr. Huskisson, and others, to *cipher* the public debt into non-existence, the hope of ever paying off the debt in our day appears to have vanished from all men's minds. To talk, indeed, of paying off a debt of £780,000,000, while continuing to maintain the government, civil and colonial establishments, foreign embassies, army, navy, and all the other sources of claim on the annual revenues of the state, appears a proposition which most minds will at once pronounce impracticable. Meanwhile it must be borne in remembrance that the entire system of taxation and expenditure pictured above is a part of the old state of things, already rapidly changing under the operations of the reformed representative system. Working, however, as it has done from the first, not as a revolution, but as a constitutional reform, its operations are necessarily gradual, and step by step. Every year is diminishing the number of burdensome and useless claimants on its old pension list, and few are likely to be added to it whose

claims on the country's liberality are not generally recognised. Many useless or sinecure offices have been abolished, though the full benefits of the change are delayed by providing for their occupants by retiring salaries. New principles of economy are being brought to bear on the entire system of government. But it is still more in the new policy of taxation that the people are reaping the direct fruits of reform. Free Trade has already reduced the cost of some of the most essential necessities of life. By an extended system of reduction of taxation on others, they have been brought within the reach of so much larger a portion of the community, that the revenue has suffered little loss from the reduction ; while in the application of the income-tax and other new sources of revenue, the labouring classes have been almost entirely exempted from their operation. All the legislation of recent years has aimed at lessening the burdens of the poor ; and amid the peace, prosperity, and perfect freedom which the people have enjoyed of late years, while nearly every country on the continent of Europe has been convulsed with political strife, revolution, and bloody civil war, there are few, indeed, even among the poorest of the people of England, who have not deemed the money well spent in maintaining the institutions of a country in which they enjoy all the stability of a monarchical government, along with all the free influence of public opinion, and the control of a wisely directed popular will, which republican institutions could possibly secure to them. The true arena for further victories is now seen to be financial reform, and the enforcement of a wise and liberal economy in every department of the state.*

* The author of the "Comic Blackstone," first published in "Punch," says:—"The only method of getting rid of the debt would be for the sovereign to file a petition at the Insolvent Court in the name of the nation, and solemnly take the benefit of the act, in the presence of the fund-holders." A few years ago, Professor Newman, of University College, London, published an able pamphlet, proposing that the interest on the debt should be paid for sixty years longer, after which it should cease.

Taking this view of the subject, the reformers of England have struck at the root of the evil ; and, in the departments of finance and taxation, have confined their efforts chiefly to the work of retrenching the Government expenditures, and rearranging the taxes so as to diffuse the payment more equitably, and to remove all restrictions on the free expansion of trade and commerce.

CHAPTER XXV.

Joseph Hume.

ACCORDING to the immemorial forms of the British Constitution, the appropriations for the supply of the annual expenditure must take their rise in the House of Commons ; and there, before they are passed, they have to encounter the severe scrutiny and determined opposition of clear-headed, honest-hearted, open-mouthed Joseph Hume. He contests all money-bills item by item, fastening upon them like a mastiff upon a baited bull.

I was listening, a few years ago, to a debate in the House of Commons on the civil list. Lord Stanley (the present Earl of Derby, then a member of the House of Commons) had just closed an impetuous speech, when a broad-shouldered, plain-looking man, rose, and deliberately taking off his hat, which seemed to be filled with papers, commenced marshalling lazy sentences, to the music of a harsh voice. A pile of Parliamentary documents lay on the seat by his side, and he held a bit of paper in his hand covered with figures. My friend informed me it was Mr. Hume. He realized the portrait my mind's eye had drawn of the man who, by dint of tireless ciphering, had convinced the masses of England that they were made the mere drudges of the privileged orders. His brief, plain speech was aimed at some measure supported by Stanley, by which

the people were to be cheated out of a few thousand pounds, to pamper some new pensioner on the public purse. Stanley was racy and flowery. Hume's speech resembled his lordship's as little as Euclid's problems do Milton's Paradise Lost. He explained the figures on his paper, drove the attack home to Stanley by a few well-directed blows, and sat down. Mr. Hume is a walking bundle of political statistics. No other man will so patiently pursue a falsehood or a false estimate or account, through a wide waste of Parliamentary documents, till he drives it into the sunlight of open exposure, as he. But as to eloquence, his speeches have no more of it than a table of logarithms. He rarely makes a speech that does not contain a good deal of bad rhetoric, and an equal amount of unquestionable arithmetical calculations. Entering Parliament thirty years ago, he immediately placed himself at the door of the national treasury, which he has ever since watched with the dogged vigilance of a Cerberus. He has been the evil genius of Chancellors of the Exchequer, worrying them more than the national debt or the public creditors; whilst sinecurists, pensioners, and placemen, have received an annual Parliamentary roasting at his hands. Delving among the corruptions of Church and State, he has laid bare the useless incumbrances that fatten on the roots of those institutions, and suck out their healthful nourishment. Bringing every proposed expenditure of money to the test of utility and the multiplication table, he has opened his budget of statistics, night after night, and measured off columns of figures by the yard and the hour, contesting the sum totals and the details of the appropriation bills, backed sometimes by the whole force of the Liberal party, often sustained by only a few Radical followers, and not infrequently left wholly alone. He was long regarded with undisguised dislike by each successive party in power, and perhaps even now he may occasionally be thought to be a bore. But nothing deters him from pursuing the line he has marked out. Sarcasm is lost upon him; wit he despises; threats have no terrors for him; abuse only rebounds on the face of his assailant. The House may

try to scrapo or cough him down—reproaches may salute his ears—clumsy abuse may fall on his head—or the fiery shafts of misdirected eloquence fly around him—but there stands clear-headed, honest-hearted, unawed Joseph Hume, entrenched behind a pile of Parliamentary papers, gathering up the fragments of his last night's speech, and displaying fresh columns of figures, for a renewed attack on some civil or ecclesiastical abuse, which has been hidden from everybody's sight but his by the accumulated dust of a century. Under any other than a free government, such obstinacy as he has sometimes displayed, in obstructing the passage of financial measures, would be deemed an unpardonable crime. Such in Hampden's resistance to ship-money became the initiative of civil war. But every expedient which the wit or pertinacity of man can devise, to defeat or diminish such plundering as he long protested against, every session of Parliament, though seemingly without avail, is not only tolerable, but a sacred duty. But his persevering labours have not been in vain, and the people, the objects of his guardian vigilance, gratefully appreciate his services, knowing that no other man has done so much to expose monetary abuses, expel licensed plunderers from the national treasury, and turn them out to get their living by honest labour.

It has been justly said, that to write a complete biography of Joseph Hume, it would be necessary to review almost every transaction in our political history for more than the third of a century. He is the recognized "patriarch of Reform," and as such merits a special notice here. "He is one of those," says a writer in the Biographical Magazine, "who, by the help of a determined will, has made himself what he is; one of that band—happily not a small nor an ignoble one—which has done more to promote the welfare of this country, and to raise her character in the eyes of the world, than any other party or circumstance which our history records."

"Joseph Hume was born at Montrose in the year 1777. His father was master of a small fishing or trading vessel,

and died when his eldest son, Joseph, was not more than nine or ten years of age. Of Captain Hume we know nothing ; but the efforts and success of the mother of Joseph Hume tell her history, and add another to the many evidences of the truthfulness of the saying, that almost all great men had remarkable mothers. Left, doubtless, in very humble circumstances, with a large family, Mrs. Hume was compelled to open a shop, and toil hard for their support and education. Her task was a hard one, but her success must have been a great and sweet reward. Her son Joseph was placed at school in Montrose, and soon attracted attention from his activity and intelligence. He was then placed with a surgeon in his native town, with whom he remained three years. At the end of that period, and when he was about sixteen years of age, he was sent to the University of Edinburgh, attended the medical classes, and took his degree as a graduate of the College of Surgeons there within three years.

“ Joseph Hume was fortunate in obtaining a cadetship in the East India Company’s service, but previous to entering upon it, he made—as was then usual, perhaps compulsory—two voyages to India in the Company’s vessels ; first, as an assistant surgeon, and afterwards as surgeon. In the interval between these voyages, he attended the London Hospitals, and became a Member of the London College of Surgeons.

“ In the year 1799, Mr. Hume joined the medical establishment in Bengal, and the rapidity with which he attained to an eminent position proves that he was not only persevering and industrious, but gifted, in addition, with great natural quickness.

“ At the time when he got to India, the Mahratta war was in progress, and everything bore an essentially military stamp. The habits of the Europeans were such as reflected no great credit upon them. Very few took the pains to acquire the language of those whom they had to command, and by whom they were surrounded. Mr. Hume’s shrewd, good sense, told him that their errors offered him a fine field. Temperance became with him a golden rule. His love of order made him accurate in his accounts, and careful

in his disbursements ; and his judgment told him, that to gain the confidence of the natives, it was necessary to understand them. By his temperance he retained his health ; by his regularity he won the confidence of his superiors in position, and, in a very short time, his acquirements in the native languages laid the foundation of his fortune.

“ It came about in the following manner :—In 1803, only his fourth year in India, he was with General Powell’s division of the army, when, by death or accident, no one was at hand to act as interpreter. Mr. Hume volunteered his services, and showed so much aptitude and proficiency, that he was appointed interpreter to the division of the army to which he belonged. Shortly after this time he also became the chief medical officer of the staff. These two appointments would seem to be sufficient for any one man to perform, under the burning sun of India ; but Mr. Hume’s constitution seems to have been proof against such things as heat and fatigue, and before long, he was, in addition to his other offices, pay-master, and post-master also. When difficulties arose in obtaining supplies of food for the army, he undertook several contracts, and, by his zeal and determined, unceasing energy, succeeded in furnishing the required commodities, with great satisfaction to those in command, and with great pecuniary benefit to himself.

“ Fortunes were made rapidly in that day in India, but we doubt if any man ever made so much money in so short a time by his own industry and perseverance as Mr. Hume. He left England for India in 1799, and in nine years from that time he had returned home with an ample fortune.”

The next four years were spent by him in a variety of valuable studies, and in visiting many parts of the kingdom, as well as in travelling in Spain, Portugal, Sicily, Sardinia, Turkey, Egypt, Greece, Malta, and the Ionian Islands. On his return, a proposition was made to him to enter Parliament, which he did in 1812. A vacancy had been caused in the representation of Weymouth, by the death of Sir John Johnstone, the patron and representative of the borough ; and Mr. Hume was chosen to fill the vacant seat.

"Mr. Hume's first recorded speech was in favour of public education. Parliament was asked to grant a sum of money to build a penitentiary house, and Mr. Hume seized the opportunity to record his opinion of the value of education, and its influence on the morality of the people. He insisted on the necessity of education for the moral reformation of the people; and dwelt on the fact that, 'the commitments and executions in England and Scotland, respectively, are in inverse proportion to their educational condition.'

"The last month of his first session gave Mr. Hume an opportunity of showing his metal, and it was not thrown away. The framework-knitters of Nottingham had fallen into great distress, and had complained bitterly of the introduction of machinery, and of new and cheaper articles of production; and a bill was introduced into Parliament nominally to protect them, but in reality to cramp and fetter the masters in such a manner as would certainly, if carried, have put an end to the entire trade of hosiery in Nottingham in a very few years, and have reduced the condition of the workmen to a much worse state than it had ever been before. Mr. Hume sat on the Ministerial benches listening to the speeches of the supporters of the bill, and became convinced that the proposed interference would be most unjust and mischievous. He told his thoughts to those with whom he sat; but they were astonished that he should think of opposing a Ministerial measure. His scruples were not to be satisfied by astonishment, or to be decreased by the difficulties in his way; and he had the audacity to get up in the House and oppose the bill at the third reading. He was told that such a proceeding was without precedent in that House; but feeling evidently thoroughly impressed with the correctness and soundness of his opinion in the matter, he proceeded to the original act of creating a precedent."

The bill was passed by the Commons; but his resistance was not thereby rendered nugatory. In the House of Lords it was opposed by the Earl of Liverpool, Lords Lauderdale, Holland, and Sidmouth; and was finally rejected.

"The manufacturers of hosiery and lace in Nottingham

and Leicester passed resolutions at public meetings, held in those towns, thanking Mr. Hume, in the most gratifying terms, for the laborious attention which he had given to the subject in committee, and also for the exertions which he had made in the House of Commons on the third reading of the bill; and requesting that the speech which he delivered on that occasion might be printed and circulated, as it accordingly was.

"Mr. Hume had only been six months in Parliament when the session came to a close; but he had already acquired a reputation, and was known as an independent and determined man, who formed his own opinions, and adhered to them with indomitable pertinacity. This did not meet the views of the trustees of Sir John Johnstone; and they declined to nominate him again for the free and independent boroughs of Weymouth and Melcombe Regis! Report says that they, at the same time, forgot to make good certain engagements which they had entered into in connection with the former election. It is said that other seats were offered to him; but he had had a taste of nomination boroughs, and was determined that if he sat in Parliament again, it should be as a perfectly free member; and so for a time the ministers of the day escaped the vigilant eye of Joseph Hume in the House of Commons."

His next field of labour was the East India House, where he was conspicuous for his unsuccessful opposition to a grant of £20,000 to Lord Melville, for his father's services!

It is curious, however, to note the strange and unlooked-for connection of cause and effect. Mr. Hume got something by these conflicts with the East India Board, which he certainly could not have calculated upon even as a remote contingency:—

An old gentleman of the name of Burnley, a West Indian merchant and East Indian proprietor, was struck with the earnestness and determination evinced by Mr. Hume at the India House, and sympathized in his opinions. He invited the young reformer to his house, and similarity of opinion and interests, so far as regarded the East India Company,

brought them frequently together. Mr. Burnley had a daughter some years younger than Mr. Hume, and an intimacy sprang up between Mr. Hume and the lady, which ended in their marriage. This union, from which a family of three sons and four daughters has resulted, remains undisturbed to the present moment—a period approaching forty years. Some of his most important labours during the next six years were devoted to the subjects of popular education and savings banks; and he bore an active share in working out the Lancastrian movement for schools for the people.

“At the general election in the autumn of 1818, he was returned to Parliament for the Aberdeen district of royal burghs, including Montrose, the place of his birth, and which within twenty years he had quitted with no possessions but a stout heart and a good constitution.

“Parliament met on the 14th of January in the following year, and the reins of Government were in the hands of Lords Liverpool, Castlereagh, Sidmouth, and Melville, Mr. Vansittart, and Mr. Canning.”

The following specimen of his proceedings at this early date shows the sturdy reformer in the character by which he is still most familiarly known:—“On the 22d of February he opposed Lord Castlereagh’s motion for a grant of £10,000 a-year to the Duke of York as *custos* of the afflicted king: ‘What was the British Parliament now called on to do? To take £10,000 a-year from the hard earnings of the distressed people, in order to put it into the privy purse. It was to this proceeding that the public were looking as an earnest of what was to be expected from Parliament on the score of economy. These might be unpleasant truths, but they ought to be heard. He, for one, would never be privy to such an act; and should sit down protesting against a measure contrary to the public feeling, and unauthorized by the royal duke.’

“On the 16th of March he moved for and obtained copies of reports and proceedings of the several presidencies in India, concerning the administration of justice, civil and criminal, and of the police, from 1810.

"On the 1st of April, in a debate on the burgh of Aberdeen, Mr. Hume, in answer to certain ministerial objections, 'acknowledged that, ultimately, such a *reform* as he expected those burghs to receive would affect *Parliamentary representation*. And why should it not? Most certainly it ought; and, at a future day, he trusted that branch of the subject would be brought before the House, and receive its favourable consideration."

On the 8th of June in the same year we thus find him protesting against augmenting taxation :—"The new imposts fell almost exclusively upon the lower orders. Rather than vote for them, he would willingly have consented to a property tax, by which the rich proprietors of the country would be compelled to contribute their fair proportion."—"The immense civil list ought instantly to be diminished from £1,200,000 to £900,000, and if sacrifices were required from the people, they ought first to be made by the prince. The higher the station, the more bound was the person filling it to set an example to the rest of the country. Instead of that, a military mania prevailed that cost the country incalculable sums ; bands trapped in scarlet and gold were daily paraded about the streets, as if to mock the squalid poverty of the lower orders. Ministers might laugh, but let them look at the other side of the picture—let them survey the misery of the poor, laborious, industrious wretches at Carlisle, or even of the unhappy beings they meet in the streets. The right honourable the member for Liverpool (Mr. Canning) had taunted the right honourable member on the floor (Mr. Tierney) for stating that a reduction of £1,000,000 in the public expenditure might be made, and had told the House in a sarcastic and ironical manner, that £2000 from the Lords of the Admiralty, and £6000 from a Secretary of State, had been pointed out for retrenchment, making the large sum of £8000, and that only £992,000 remained to make up the million !

"Gold lace and gorgeous trappings added nothing to the British character ; economy was what was needed—strict, undeviating economy ; and, instead of it, waste and expen-

diture ran riot in all departments. Look at the Commander-in-chief : would any man believe that we were paying sixteen guineas a-day to an individual for filling an office which was wholly useless ? The income of that royal duke (the Duke of York) was scarcely less than £100,000 per annum."

" In reporting this speech, the 'Times' attributed the ministerial laughter to Mr. Canning, and as the 'Times' was inimical to that gentleman, the matter was taken up by him in a very angry spirit. The printer of the paper, Mr. C. Bell, was summoned to the bar of the House, and eventually the reporter, Mr. John Paine Collier, was ordered to attend, and was committed to the custody of the Serjeant-at-Arms for not seeing and hearing with perfect accuracy in a position where it was admitted to be almost impossible to do either at all."

A few of these examples of Mr. Hume's early labours will serve as specimens of the whole : "On the 24th of July 1819, he moved for, and obtained, an account of the national debt from 1786 to 1819, on a much improved model as compared with previous returns of a like nature.

" In December following, he moved for papers showing the condition and cost of our navy ; spoke in the highest terms of the services which it had performed, and admitted the great necessity of its being maintained in efficiency ; but affirmed that an expenditure of from six to seven millions sterling per annum, whilst we had only 19,000 seamen, appeared enormous. We had then 607 ships in the navy, and 120 new vessels were on the stocks.

" The motion was met with the most determined opposition from Ministers ; whereupon Mr. Hume said that, 'with regard to the expense of the accounts, he would undertake, for five pounds, if they would give him the inspection of their books, to obtain all he desired. He could not but complain of the spirit in which the motion had been met ; and he could see no difficulty in making the returns, *unless, indeed, there were no accounts at all for the earlier period.*'"

This, there is good reason for believing, was very nearly the real state of affairs.

On the 15th of May, we find him assailing another abuse now happily at an end :—

“ Mr. Hume attacked the *secrecy* of the Civil List. He would mention the instance of plate being given to several individuals. It might be right, but the House had no means of judging that it was so. The House knew not why services of plate had been given to Lord Jocelyn, the Marquis of Winchester, Lord Yarmouth, or Mr. Canning. Why £3000 in plate was given to Mr. Canning, was unknown to the House. He was one who deprecates, who dreaded, secrecy and seclusion ; and he would not cease to think that things were not all right, till a fair and manly avowal of all should be made to that House.”

In the following year he excited the indignation of the Ministry by exposing the want of all accuracy or method in the ordnance estimates. “ This exposure made by Mr. Hume,” says a journal of the day, “ is a good one. It has gone forth, and opened the eyes of a great many persons. He did not carry his motion. The Ministers beat him, however, only by fourteen votes. Let it be observed, too, that *before the division took place*, Lord Castlereagh and Mr. Ward pledged themselves to lay before the House, in another shape, all the information sought to be obtained by Mr. Hume.

“ In this motion Mr. Hume had the support of Henry Brougham, John Cam Hobhouse, and Mr. Bernal ; and his fellow teller was Lord Folkestone, now the Earl of Radnor. Of the forty-four financial reformers who voted with him, how few remain behind ! and of those who still live, and can recall the conflicts in which they took part, how few have maintained, like Mr. Hume, a firm and enlightened consistency !

“ When, in the same year, Mr. Hume brought the question of the emoluments of the Stamp Distributors before the House, Sir James Mackintosh said, ‘ That his honourable friend was entitled to the gratitude of the country for the zeal and perseverance which marked his public conduct, and

which rendered him one of the most useful members of that House. The perseverance of his honourable friend had obtained that concession from Ministers which they had formerly refused to make.' And Lord Alexander Hamilton 'expressed his acknowledgments to the honourable member for his unwearied exertions in promoting retrenchment and economy, at a time when the public interests so imperiously called for them.'

"The importance of the subject thus opened by Mr. Hume, may be collected from the fact that one distributor of stamps had received £3821 a-year, for nineteen years; another, £2600; and a third lucky distributor, £5881.

"On the 27th of February 1822, there had been a grand fight between Mr. Hume and Mr. Croker, the secretary to the Admiralty, upon a question of figures, in connection with the navy estimates. The Ministerials fancied that they had discovered a big hole in Joseph's coat, but it turned out that it existed only in their imagination; whereupon Mr. Henry Brougham said: 'He would continue to Mr. Hume his full reliance, because he had never yet found him fail in what he had undertaken to establish, and because on this occasion, when his accuracy was especially impeached, he had signally triumphed. He hoped he would go on with the same persevering zeal for the public good, careless of the taunts of those who profited by abuses, forgetful of the neglect shown to his labours by the gentlemen opposite, thinking only of his country, dreaming only of his duty, and, great as his services were to that country, still laying up additional claims to gratitude.'

It was remarked by a member of the House in reference to Mr. Hume's labours at this time:—"He recollects when the honourable member for Aberdeen first began that course of conduct which he had pursued with so much success, every possible attempt, short of absolute insult, was made to deter him from proceeding. Sarcasm and imputation of every sort were directed against him. Before the end of the session, however, those very individuals who had treated him in this manner, came to him, cap in

hand, and offered every assistance in furtherance of his designs."

"This refers principally to a speech of Lord Castlereagh, who, after the most virulent abuse had been lavished upon Mr. Hume by the supporters of Government, and seeing that such conduct was telling against the Ministry, passed a high eulogium upon Mr. Hume's persevering endeavours. The former speaker goes on to say, 'What was the cause of this change of sentiment with regard to the honourable member? It was, that the country had decided the question in his favour!'"

"In the year 1830 his services were rewarded by his being elected one of the members for the county of Middlesex, in conjunction with Mr. Byng, the veteran reformer. Mr. Hume was re-elected in 1831; but in 1836 a desperate stand was made against him by the Tories, and they succeeded in replacing him by Colonel Wood, an officer in the army, whose political services no one had ever heard of. The news of Mr. Hume's defeat exasperated the reformers beyond measure; and the instant that the fact reached Kilkenny, he was proposed as a candidate for that place, and triumphantly elected."

Let it not be supposed that Mr. Hume has devoted himself exclusively to exchequer budgets and appropriation bills. He has taken a leading share in all liberal measures, advocating Catholic emancipation and Parliamentary reform, and has long been an able champion of Free Trade. He is one of the best "working men" in Parliament, and by constant practice and perseverance he has obtained a position amongst its most influential members. While destitute of the brilliant talents of a Parliamentary debater, and long treated in Parliament as a mere demagogue and pandancer to the lowest popular prejudices, he has held on his way consistently and perseveringly, until he has had his reward, not only in seeing his talents and true character appreciated, but in witnessing the recognition of many of the principles long advocated by him, seemingly in vain, and which were at first looked upon even by members of

the liberal party as Utopian, and altogether impracticable.

"One of the greatest services ever performed in aid of the movement towards Free Trade, was the examination into the whole subject of the import duties by the Committee of 1840, of which Mr. Hume was promoter and chairman. The evidence taken before that committee was of the most valuable and practical character, being given principally by men of high standing in the commercial world. The labour bestowed upon this inquiry by Mr. Hume was enormous, and did not cease with the issue of the report. That document was reprinted as a supplement to the '*Spectator*' newspaper, of the 2d of January 1841, a committee was appointed to disseminate it all over the country, and a subscription entered into for that purpose. Many thousand copies of this supplement were printed, and Mr. Hume, who had the management of the matter, and, we believe, bore by far the largest share of the expense (which must have been very great), sent a copy to the chief officers of every corporate town, and to a vast number of other persons in this country; to every member of the Senate and House of Representatives at Washington, the mayors of every town, and a vast number of other individuals in the United States of America; and to many influential men in all parts of Europe. This report mooted the subject of Free Trade in every corner of the land, and advertised Mr. Hume's name as the leader and prime mover in the work; yet, strange to say, at the general election, which, following shortly after its appearance, Mr. Hume being invited to stand for Leeds, was rejected in favour of a young Conservative nobleman, and a gentleman totally unknown in the political world; and the last Protectionist Parliament met without Joseph Hume. Another election, however, soon followed, and he was again returned for his native place, which he still represents.

"It is not to be supposed that Mr. Hume's course has been strewed with flowers; on the contrary, in the early part of his career he was met with an amount of virulent

personality that was almost overwhelming ; and even at a later period, no stone that could be thrown at him has been withheld, no slander was considered unfitting, and no inuendoes too vile to be uttered against him. The world has forgotten all this, or nearly so, and the difficulties and injustice that he met with when the truth could not be whispered without danger, and to speak it aloud was almost certain destruction, have been alike forgotten."

"Mr. Hume," says the writer in the Biographical Magazine, from which we have already quoted, "is not a man about whom the world are likely to be unanimous ; he has occupied too prominent, too decided a position for that. But there are points upon which all must agree. His amazing capacity for labour has become proverbial ; so great, indeed, is it, that we hardly know whether, in giving an idea of it, we shall be most likely to terrify or to stimulate our young readers. His ordinary habit has been for thirty years, and, we doubt not, always was much the same, to be at work in good time in the morning—often before breakfast—then to sit at his desk writing letters, arranging his papers for the House, seeing, perhaps, during the morning, twenty people on business ; and we have been told that when he sat for Middlesex, he often found as many as that waiting for him when he came down in the morning. Those matters occupy him generally until it is time to go down to the House of Commons, or to some committee. When the House meets, it rarely assembles without Mr. Hume ; and if a division should happen to be taken at three o'clock in the morning, you would have been quite certain not long ago, and would have a good chance now, of finding his name in the list. This would satisfy most men for one day ; but if the House rose early—say at one o'clock or so—Mr. Hume would go home, let himself in without disturbing any one, quietly sit down in his room, leave a trayful of letters to be posted the first thing in the morning, and go to bed—nobody knew at what hour—to be up in good time, and go through the same routine again the next day.

"In labour, we believe he never had his equal. We have heard more than one member of Parliament—themselves first-rate working men—say that they have sometimes felt positively ashamed that fatigue has quite subdued them, when Mr. Hume, by many years their senior, has seemed as fresh, as wakeful, and as workful as ever. And many a man, urged on by his own interest, and by every motive that confers more than ordinary energy on mortals—his pocket, or perhaps even his reputation, depending upon the issue of some inquiry or motion—has felt sometimes that his kind, but tremendous friend, was not unlikely to bring the case to a tragical termination, by working him to death at his elbow. So indomitable is Mr. Hume's power, that we believe he was never detected asleep but once; and when Sir Robert Peel, who was speaking, noticed the extraordinary occurrence, Mr. Hume replied, on the instant of opening his eyes, 'How can I possibly help it, if you will spin out such an argument for a couple of hours?' The build of his frame is Herculean, and points out a man possessed of great power; but that is not the case generally with men who do much of his kind of work. Giants and athletes are not well adapted for lawyers, doctors, or scribes. Mr. Hume's constitution is strong undoubtedly, but he is compelled to keep strict guard over himself; and often treats himself with doses of medicine—not homoeopathic. Yet with all his caution, and all his strength, he manages to knock himself up for a week or so every session. His habits are simple and temperate in the extreme; and, when very busy, he requires looking after, to prevent him from skipping his dinner and other meals altogether. Besides the enormous mass of public business which he gets through, his friends, knowing his love of work, do all they can to please him, by dying and leaving him executor to their property, trustee to their children, &c. When he does such work we believe nobody knows: but he does it, and well; and gets plenty of it to do.

"We cannot forbear telling an anecdote of Mr. Hume, illustrative of his remarkable self-possession and fearless-

ness ; we believe that it has already been printed more than once, and, unlike most stories, it possesses the prosaic quality of being true. Mr. Hume was in a small packet off the coast of Scotland, when the weather became very boisterous ; the master of the boat either got frightened or did not know his course, and certain destruction seemed to await the unfortunate passengers. Mr. Hume saw the dilemma ; demanded to see the captain's charts, which were freely given up to him, together with the entire control of the vessel ; ascertained the position of the vessel in a short time, altered her course ; saved, probably, the lives of all on board—and, when all danger was past, went into the cabin, and, obtaining some paste, mended the captain's torn and neglected maps ! This was reported many years ago by a young man who was on board at the time, and helped Mr. Hume to handle the paste-brush."

Nor must it be overlooked that he is no indiscriminate economist. No member of the House of Commons takes a livelier interest in the British Museum, the National Gallery, the Public Parks and Gardens, or the like means for the education and healthful recreation of the people. Universities and schools have commanded a large share of his attention, and he bore a liberal part in the establishment of University College, London. Grants for educational purposes, when wisely applied, command his hearty favour ; and he is ever ready to support the largest votes which can be shown to be necessary for the adequate maintenance and extension of these truly national institutions, or for establishing libraries, galleries, and museums, throughout the kingdom.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Literature of Freedom—The Liberal Literature of England—Periodicals—Edinburgh Review—Its Founders—Its Contributors—Its standard and style of Criticism—Its Influence—London Quarterly Review started—Political services of the Edinburgh—Its Ecclesiastical Tone—Sydney Smith—Decline of the Political Influence of the Edinburgh—Blackwood's Magazine—Tait's Magazine—Westminster Review—The Eclectic—British Quarterly—North British Review—The New Monthly—The Weekly Press—Cobbett's Register—Hunt's Examiner—Mr. Fonblanque—Mr. Landor—The Spectator—Holland House—French and English Literature—The English Constitution—Conclusion.

In the times of the Commonwealth, when the mind of England was set free, Milton was the centre of a constellation of intellects that exemplified in their writings the value of his own saying—"Give me the liberty to know and to argue freely, above all other liberties." After his sun set, liberty without licentiousness hid behind a cloud, which was not fully cleared away till the storm of the American and French Revolutions. While the literature of England depended for sustenance upon the patronage of the great, it was marked, with occasional exceptions, by the brand of servility; and so long as authors looked for remuneration to the munificence of the lord or lady to whom they dedicated their works, they laid their choicest gifts at the footstool of power and title. As education became diffused, enlarging the circle of readers, writers began to look to the public for patronage, and adapted their works to the popular taste. Then the publishers and booksellers became the agents, the middle-men, between the author and the reader. Long after this change, however, it was hazardous for a writer to lift his pen against existing institutions in Church and State; and he who run a tilt against these, were he able to make sale of his works, might deem himself fortunate if he escaped a prosecution for libel or sedition, that emptied his purse of its guineas, or planted his feet in the stocks. The impulse

given to European intellect by the first French Revolution was not confined to statesmen and warriors. It stimulated thought in all classes. As in politics, so in letters, fetters fell from men's minds, and reason, imagination, and utterance were emancipated. The Fox school of politicians encouraged the growth of a literature in England favourable to freedom. It immediately started up, rank and luxuriant; and though bearing every variety of fruit that could delight the eye, or regale the appetite, or poison the taste, the decided preponderance of the product has been congenial to rational liberty, healthy morals, and sound learning.

In estimating the literary influences which have contributed to the cause of progress and reform in Great Britain during the present century, a high place should be assigned to the EDINBURGH REVIEW.

This celebrated periodical appeared at an era when independence of thought and manliness of utterance had almost ceased from the public journals and councils of the kingdom. The terrors of the French Revolution had arrested the march of liberal opinions. The declamation of Burke and the ambition of Napoleon had frightened the isle from its propriety. Tooke had barely escaped the gallows through the courageous eloquence of Erskine. Fox had withdrawn from the contest in despair, and cherished in secret the fires of freedom, to burst forth in happier times.

Previous to 1802, the literary periodicals of Great Britain were mere repositories of miscellanies, relating to art, poetry, letters, and gossip, partly original and partly selected, huddled together without system, and making up a medley less varied and respectable than an ordinary weekly newspaper of the present day. The criticisms of books were jejune in the extreme, consisting chiefly of a few smart witticisms, and meagre connecting remarks stringing together ample quotations from the work under review. They rarely ventured into deep water on philosophical subjects, and as seldom pushed out upon the tempestuous sea of political discussion. Perhaps one or two journals might

plead a feeble exception to the general rule; but the mass was weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable.

The Edinburgh Review appeared. It bounded into the arena without the countenance of birth or station, or the imprimatur of the universities or literary clubs. Its avowed aim was to erect a higher standard of merit, to secure a bolder style and a purer taste in literature, and to apply philosophical principles and the maxims of truth and humanity to politics—thus aiming to be the manual of the scholar, and the monitor of the statesman. As in its advent it had asked permission of no one *to be*, so as to its future course it asked no advice as to what it should *do*. Soliciting no quarter, promising no favours, its independent bearing and defiant tone broke the spell which held the mind of a nation in fetters. Its first number revived the discussion of great political principles. The splendid diction and searching philosophy of an essay on the causes and consequences of the French Revolution at once arrested the public eye, and stamped the character of the journal. Pedants in the pulpit, and scribblers of verses in printed albums, saw, from other articles in the manifesto, that exterminating war was declared on their inanities and sentimentalities. The new journal was perused with avidity, and produced a sensation in all classes of readers, exciting admiration and envy, love and hatred, defiance and fear. It rapidly obtained a large circulation, steadily rose to the highest position ever attained by any similar publication, and reigned supreme in an empire of its own creation for a third of a century, accomplishing vast good mingled with no inconsiderable evil.

The honour of founding this Review belongs to Sydney Smith, who suggested the idea to Jeffrey, Brougham, and Murray—he, a young curate of Salisbury Plain, “driven in stress of politics” into Edinburgh, while on a voyage to Germany—they, briefless young advocates of the northern capital. They all subsequently rose to eminence; all becoming lords except Smith, who might have been made a lord bishop if he had not been created the prince of wits. The four adventurers, who met in the third or fourth storcy

of Buccleuch Place, and agreed to start a Review, provided they could get the first number published on trust—they not having money enough to pay the printer—could not have dreamed that the journal would be eagerly read for half a century, from London to Calcutta, from the Cape of Good Hope to the sources of the Mississippi; that Brougham would become Lord Chancellor of Great Britain, Jeffrey and Murray Judges and Lords of Session of the highest court of Scotland, and Smith Canon of St. Paul's Cathedral, firing hot shot at Pennsylvanians for not paying interest on a small loan from his surplus of £70,000.

Did space permit, it might be interesting to attempt to trace the causes of the great power which this periodical exerted over public opinion. The temper of the times when it appeared in respect to politics, and the Dead Sea of dulness in literary criticism that spread all around, gave novelty to an enterprise which proposed to combine the highest literary and scientific excellences with the boldest discussion of public men and affairs. The execution of the plan came up to the lofty tone of the manifesto. In its infancy, and onward to its maturity, the Edinburgh surrounded itself with a host of contributors whose names have given and received celebrity from its pages. Smith, Jeffrey, Brougham, Murray, Scott, Playfair, Leslie, Brewster, Stewart, Horner, Romilly, Stephen, Mackintosh, Brown, Malthus, Ricardo, Hallam, Hamilton, Hazlitt, Forster, M'Culloch, Macaulay, Carlyle, Talfourd—and these are but a tithe—have given it their choicest productions, ranging through the fields of politics, finance, jurisprudence, ethics, science, poetry, art, and letters, in all their multiform departments. The contributions of many of these writers have been extracted and published in separate volumes, which, in their turn, have challenged the criticism of celebrated reviewers on both sides of the Atlantic.

Nor was less zest imparted to its earlier pages because ability was not always accompanied with candour, and attacks upon distinguished authors and statesmen were no less fierce than assaults upon popular works and venerable

institutions. Persons and principles were alike mixed in the melee. Nobody, nothing, was spared that opposed the march of the literary Tamerlane. In the department of literary criticism, its standard was just, lofty, or capricious, according to its mood; its style, by turns and by authors, grave or sarcastic, eulogistic or saucy, argumentative or sentimental, chaste or slashing, classical or savage. A man-of-war of the first class, and of the regular service, when civil and ecclesiastical abuses were to be discovered and destroyed, in literary contests it often run up the flag and used the weapons of the buccanier. Not only did it exterminate the small craft of ephemeral novelists and poetasters, but it pursued Wordsworth, Southey, Coleridge, Byron, Keats, Montgomery, and other foremost men of the day, with a fierce, though not always unjust or indiscriminate censure. The very temerity of the Review, sustained by such rare learning, ability, and brilliancy, gave it currency with friends and foes. It was admitted by its enemies that no similar publication displayed so many rich veins of thought, uttered so many acute observations, or arrayed its offspring in such graceful drapery; and they found fault, not so much with the standards set up, or the principles inculcated, as with their alleged unjust application to their favourite books and authors. The answer of the Reviewers was short and characteristic. If they used the stiletto or the scalping-knife when they ought to use the scimitar or the broad-sword, why, that was according to the canons of criticism they had in such cases made and provided, and the friends of the slain might resort to reprisals.

The Review gave an impulse to periodical literature, and elevated the tone of literary criticism and political disquisition. Crub Street made a stand against the invader, worthy of its ancient garrets. It issued fifty pamphlets in a single year, explaining, extenuating, defending, defying. But dulness and insipidity at length gave way, and retreated rapidly to the trunk-makers and green grocers. Much evil was mingled with the good. The excellences of the new journal were not alone imitated. Ferocity and fire blazed

out from the pages of cotemporaneous publications. But they were the rush-light to Vesuvius. At length soldiers of higher mettle and brighter armour than Grub Street could muster took the field. Byron had shivered a lance with the Edinburgh. Southey was stung to madness, and vowed vengeance. Scott denounced its polities as rash, radical, and revolutionary. The great Whig rhinoceros from beyond the Tweed had ravaged the softer landscape of England, and tossed Tory politicians and poets on its horn for six years, when Brougham's celebrated article on Don Pedro de Cevallos and Spanish affairs appeared, avowing ultra-democratic doctrines. Scott, who had some time before ceased to be a contributor, now ordered his subscription to be stopped, and entered into correspondence with Ellis, Southey, Gifford, and others, in regard to starting a rival periodical, that should encounter the spoiler in his own field, and with weapons of like temper and force. The result was the establishment, in 1809, of the Quarterly Review in London. Its editor was William Gifford ; and in boldness, bitterness, dogmatism, and ferocity, he was a full match for any writer in the Edinburgh ; though, in comprehension of broad principles and appreciation of the beautiful, in acuteness and originality, he fell below all the best writers in the journal he was set up to overthrow.

But dazzling as has been the meteoric career of the Edinburgh in the firmament of letters, it is in the department of governmental reform that its greatest and best services have been rendered. Its founder has well said, that at its advent "it was always considered a piece of impertinence in England if a man of less than £2000 or £3000 a-year had any opinion at all on important subjects." The Edinburgh Review has taught a Manchester calico-printer how to take the Government by the beard. In the forty-six years of its existence, it has seen the British slave trade abolished—a devastating European war terminated—the Holy Alliance broken up, and its anointed conspirators brought into contempt—the Corporation and Test Acts repealed—the Catholics emancipated—the criminal code humanized—the death-

penalty circumscribed—the Reform Bill carried, extending the suffrage to half a million of people—West India and East India slavery abolished—the commercial monopoly of the East India Company overthrown—municipal corporations reformed—the Court of Chancery opened, and sunlight let in upon its doings—the common law courts made more accessible to the masses—the law of libel made endurable—the poor laws made more charitable—the game laws brought nearer the verge of modern civilization—the corn laws repealed—the post-office made subservient to all who can raise a penny—the means of educating the poor increased—the privileges of the Established Church curtailed in three kingdoms—and a long catalogue of minor reforms effected, and dignity and intensity imparted to the popular demand for still larger concessions to the progressive genius of the age. And this journal may proudly say, that all these measures have received the support, and most of them the early, zealous, and powerful advocacy of the Edinburgh Review. These measures gained advantages from the countenance of the Review, far beyond the intrinsic force of the arguments with which it supported them; as, indeed, did the party of progress whose oracle it was. Its brilliant literary reputation shed a lustre around the most radical political opinions, clothing them in bright raiment, and giving them an introduction into the halls of the learned and the saloons of the noble. Its numerous articles on liberal and general education, especially those written by Sydney Smith, are above all praise. And while it impaled bores and charlatans in literature, and scourged quacks and scoundrels in the State, it was no less a terror to hypocrites and oppressors in the Church. But candour must admit, that if it was generally a terror to evil doers in the name of religion, it was not always a praise to them that did well.

The ecclesiastical and religious tone of the Review, during the first twenty years of its existence, was imparted to it mainly by Sydney Smith. He had a good deal more wit than charity; was not ashamed to steal his sermons from Taylor, Hooker, and Barrow, that he might save time to

shoot sarcasms at Wesley and “the nasty Methodists,” and shower ridicule upon Wilberforce and “the patent Christians at Clapham;” and seemed to have little reverence for any part of the Establishment which he defended, except its tithes and its titles. He pleaded for toleration and emancipation, not so much because Dissenters and Catholics deserved them, but because to grant them would silence clamour, and more firmly secure the power and patronage, and exalt the dignity of “the Church.” But though it breathed a good deal of this spirit, the Review always contended for religious freedom, and, when need be, was as hearty in its assault upon the mitre of the primate, and its ridicule of the bench of bishops, as of ranters and patent Christians. Sydney Smith hated tyranny, but he loved money ; he was a humane man, and no ascetic ; and it was his superabundant wit, and the ludicrous light in which almost everything struck his mind, that gave edge to his sarcasms, and made him seem more uncharitable than he really was. Two of his articles in the Edinburgh carried through Parliament a bill extending to all grades of felons the full benefit of counsel when on trial. Previous to this, counsel, even in capital cases, were not allowed to address juries in favour of prisoners ; and before a poor wretch could get half through a stammering speech in his own behalf, he was generally stopped by the judge. Ah ! old Dean Swift humanized ; few men have done more to explode error, shame bigotry, and expose abuses, than thou !

As a political journal, the influence of the Edinburgh Review has, to a great extent, passed away. Its power and glory culminated during the administration of Earl Grey. Till then, it shone in unrivalled splendour, pouring its beams in the path of progress, and shedding more light around the footsteps of reform than all other like sources combined. Other luminaries, fresher in their rising, and reflecting the opinions of the awakened mind of England, have dimmed its fires. It has grown wayward, timid, conservative, and aristocratic, touching gingerly, and with gloved fingers, topics which it once handled without mittens. From the

hour it became the organ of power, it ceased to be the herald of the people. In its decline, it has occasionally roused itself, and struck a blow for freedom, which revived the memory of the glorious days before the blight of Conservatism came upon it. It has shared the fate of the Whigs, and of all Quarterlies, as the organs of political opinion. Periodical literature has seen a revolution in the public taste. Quarterlies and Monthlies hardly survived the advent of railways. The electric telegraph, which can barely keep pace with the revolutions of parties and states, has made even Weeklies seem stale. The Penny Magazine defies the Quarterly, and the Daily Press rules the hour. But, ten thousand thanks to the Edinburgh Review, for ushering in an era which has made its own existence no longer necessary to the politician and the statesman.

A brief notice of a few other liberal periodicals will close this chapter.

The London Quarterly having failed to destroy the influence of the Edinburgh, a less stately and more lively periodical was planted on the spot where the great Whig champion bore sway, to encounter its polities with the lighter weapons of wit and satire, and dispute its mastery in the field of polite letters and criticism. Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine entered the lists in 1817. Reckoning among its contributors some of the ripest scholars and rarest wits of the times, it occupies a first place among literary journals, while able partizans sprinkle its pages with the spiciest vindications of ultra Tory politics. During the Reform Bill excitement, Tait's Edinburgh Magazine was sent forth as an antidote to Blackwood. A corps of clever essayists and critics gave it for a time a highly respectable position in the literary world, and its political articles, written with vigour and eloquence, have kept pace with the advancing steps of the age. But it has not maintained a commanding position, and its influence must now be very small indeed.

After several unsuccessful attempts had been made to establish a permanent Quarterly journal in London, to sup-

port the liberal side in politics, Mr. Bentham and his disciples started the Westminster Review in 1824. Leaping into the arena far ahead of the Edinburgh, it drew its blade in defence of the radicals, and proposed fundamental reforms in the constitution of the country. Reflecting the views of its celebrated founder, it has advocated, with great ability, unqualified suffrage, freedom of trade, the dissolution of the union of Church and State, the abolition of the hereditary feature of the House of Peers, the abrogation of the Court of Chancery, and a complete remodelling and codification of the laws of the realm. It has repeatedly changed hands, and is now once more the organ of a new party, not less able, but probably much less tangible and practical, in their ideal of reform. The Eclectic Review, a periodical devoted rather to ecclesiastical reforms, though it indulges in literature and politics, has, under the editorial control of Josiah Conder, Esq., Dr. Price, and Dr. Stowell, rendered some service in the cause of philanthropy. Robert Hall and John Foster, names familiar to scholars and divines in both hemispheres, used to contribute to its pages.

Two other reviews deserve to be noticed here. The British Quarterly, under the editorship of Dr. Vaughan, was established to represent English Nonconformists. It has been conducted with considerable ability, and some of its scientific articles especially are of a high order. But its political tone is feeble, and its assertion of principles too timid and short-sighted, to exert any influence on the progress of opinion, or to command the suffrages of the more active body of English Nonconformists. The North British Review originated with the Free Church party in Scotland, and has always maintained the high tone of religious feeling which characterizes that body. In its general character, however, it retains no traces of religious partisanship, but includes writers of ability of all sects and parties; numbering, it is believed, among its contributors, the Archbishop of Dublin, and others of the most distinguished scholars of the Church of England. It has added another valuable contribution from the literary

circles of Edinburgh to the influential periodicals of the country.

Numerous monthly magazines have sprung up in imitation of the Edinburgh Blackwood. But though the talent displayed in many of them is great, their influence has ceased to be widely felt. The New Monthly Magazine, under the editorship of Campbell, and afterward of Bulwer, though chiefly devoted to literature, espoused the liberal side in politics; and a host of other quarterly and monthly periodicals now advocate every variety of opinion in politics, religion, and criticism.

But it is not the quarterly and the monthly periodicals that guide public opinion. At best, they but follow in its wake. The weekly and the daily ones trace the channels in which its currents flow. And here we are launched upon an ocean of periodical literature. From the days of Wilkes' "North Briton," down to those of Punch's "Charivari," a constantly swelling host of newspapers has borne the cause of the people forward from triumph to triumph. Confining our view to those standing out of the mass, on peculiar and independent ground, the eye is at once attracted by the Register and the Examiner—the greatest of their class. The former was founded by William Cobbett, the latter by Leigh Hunt; the one uttering the discontents of the lower class of reformers, the other reflecting the opinions of the higher. Latterly, the reformatory tone of the Examiner is somewhat modified, but it maintains its place in the front rank of the weekly press. The Spectator, also, deservedly holds a high position in this department of newspapers. At first it was strongly radical in its politics; but, like the Examiner, it has latterly abated its tone without diminishing its ability.

I cannot close this imperfect glance at the liberal literature of England, without a brief allusion to the peculiar but powerful aid rendered to it by the late Lord Holland. The nephew of Fox inherited much of the eloquence, all the democracy, and more than all the love for learning and the fine arts, of his illustrious uncle. For a third of a century,

which carried England forward a hundred years in the path of improvement, "Holland House" was the centre of attraction for liberal statesmen, orators, poets, painters, wits, and scholars. Mingling in the brilliant throngs that so often filled its gorgeous drawing-rooms, elegant picture-galleries, and ample libraries, were to be seen statesmen who guided Cabinets, and orators who swayed Senates; men of letters who had reached the heights of human knowledge, and modest genius just struggling into notice; poets reposing under the shadow of their fame, and poets just plucking their first laurel-leaf; sculptors who had engraven life in the marble, and painters who had impressed beauty on the canvass; the writer of the first article in the last Edinburgh, and the author of the best comedy then acting at Drury Lane; here a Whig Duke with a long title and a landed air, and there a Radical editor under indictment for a seditious libel on the Government; the Duchess of Sutherland shedding grace around this circle, and Mrs. Opie diffusing benevolence around that; Buxton, the brewer, discoursing on prison discipline with Bentham the philosopher; Brougham explaining to a Polish refugee his plan for educating the people, while Moore delighted a bevy of belles by singing his last Irish melody; Sydney Smith enlivening this alcove with his humour, and Mackintosh enlightening that with his learning—all these varied and diverse elements meeting on terms of social equality, and impressing upon the literary mind of the country the all-influential lesson, that, so far from losing caste by embracing liberal political opinions, the man of letters, of science, and of art, might find the profession of that faith a passport to circles where fashion displayed its smiles and power dispensed its favours.

The literature of France prostrated the throne of Louis Philippe, and erected the republic of Lamartine. The follies of the cowardly Louis, the errors of his vacillating ministers, the barricades of the *sans-culottes* mobs, the bayonets of the recusant guards, were insufficient to have overthrown the monarchy, had not the literature of France been gradually preparing the national mind for the great change. During

the preceding thirty years, a taste for philosophical speculation had raised up a school of speculative thinkers and political theorists, who had employed their powers in eulogizing the rights of man, in depicting his wrongs, in displaying the merits of the masses, in painting the crimes of the Government, and in demonstrating that the throne and its institutions stood between the labouring poor and their social regeneration. Poets, essayists, novelists, dramatists, and orators, brought the artillery of eloquence, the lighter and more insinuating weapons of romance, and the glittering arms of wit and satire, to bear against the abuses in the administration of affairs, and especially the factitious institutions of the State, which sat heavily upon the middle and lower orders of society. As the crisis drew nearer, the liberal portion of the political press stimulated the popular discontent—the *cafes* and clubs were thronged with the advocates of equality—the theatre and the opera gratified the public taste by adapting their amusements to the appetite for social change—the ballad-singers chanted the blessings of republicanism and fraternity at the street corners, in bad verse and harsh melody—the Parisian circles of fashion, nowhere more brilliant, nowhere more influential, reflected abroad through a thousand avenues the popular sentiment, imparting to it the charms of aristocratic favour, nowhere more universally disowned, and yet more highly valued, than at Paris. These influences had been at work all over France, and especially in Paris—the national heart of this susceptible and fickle people—for years before the mere accident of the suppression of a Reform Banquet became, in the natural order of events, the occasion of that explosion which electrified Europe. But though the streams of public feeling had so long poured into a channel, whose currents tended toward one result—the undermining of existing institutions—Louis Philippe was blinded to his destiny, and boasted of his power to crush the rising mass, only a few hours before the tri-coloured flag, bearing the motto, “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity,” was displayed from the Hotel de Ville, while he leaped into a carriage, on the very spot where the blood of

Louis XVI. was poured out, and, with money borrowed of his guards, fled an exile from republican France.

Thus the literature of France prostrated the throne of Louis Philippe, and erected the republic of Lamartine, and the offspring has proved such as might be looked for from this parentage. Essayists, novelists, and such dramatists, poets, and philosophers as Paris has now to boast of, were indeed a strange enough class of heralds of a great national regeneration. It might be truly said of such high priests of liberty, "As with the people, so with the priest." A republic was established, with equality, fraternity, and vote by ballot. What its final fruits may be, who shall tell? Its latest results are an empire and absolute despotism, and a Louis Napoleon in exchange for a Louis Philippe! [The literature of England can do more to change its institutions than the clubs of Chartists or the pikes of Repealers. Without the shedding of one drop of human blood, it has already revolutionized the Government, and established institutions that recognize and protect the rights of the whole people. It is a literature at once purer, more practical, and loftier in its aim, than that of France. But a far more important element in the contrast between the two nations is to be found in their relative preparation for self-government. This France has yet all to learn; whereas England has been accoustomed for centuries, in the corporate institutions of her boroughs—in her universities, county meetings, and even in her old Parliamentary elections—imperfect and faulty as they were—to a large and even increasing amount of independent self-government. Still more, from the days of Sir Thomas More to our own, some reverence for the freedom and independence of Parliaments has been maintained in the worst times; and, above all, the people of England have learned the grand lesson, that the interests of a nation are safer in the improvement of the institutions with which they are familiar, than in the adoption of any new system, however specious in theory or attractive in its untried aspects. This important lesson, which France has yet to learn, was taught to England in the great Revolution,

which, though it seemed to end in the restoration of Charles II., and the restitution of all the exploded despotism of the Stuarts, was in reality the parent of all the changes which have followed, down to our own day. The English Constitution has indeed grown as a living thing. Under the Tudors, the Stuarts, the Commonwealth, the Prince of Orange, and the House of Hanover, it has ever made some advance, established some new point, taught some new truth to the people ; and while the republicans of America and the quasi-republicans of France pretend to look down on monarchical England, each has borrowed all that is really valuable in their governments from hers. What is the Government of the United States, with its president, its ministry, and its two Houses of Assembly, but the nearest copy that it was possible for the colonists to make of the constitutional government of the old mother country they had abjured ? In truth, they who talk of the Government of England as a monarchy in any such sense as to admit of its contrasting with the Republic of the United States, allow themselves to be deceived by names in place of things. The difference between the English monarchy under the last of the Tudors —Henry VIII. and Queen Elizabeth—and the existing Government of the United States, are scarcely a whit greater in all essential practical points than are those that place the present Government of England in contrast with that old era of her history when the reformation of religion was effected. Compared, indeed, with even the freest of the true monarchies of continental Europe, the Government of England is practically that of a republic with a hereditary president. The voice and will of the people in reality determine who shall be the Ministry ; and their representatives in the House of Commons control the supplies, and determine the annual taxation and expenditure, independently of the other branches of the constitution. More than this will not be demanded until English liberty shall be transformed into lawless license, and her people imitate the speculative theorists of neighbouring states, who must needs pull their whole house about their ears every time

they discover a flaw in it demanding some repair. The people of England have now their liberty in their own hands. Year by year, since the Reform Bill passed, has witnessed a slow yet steady and safe progress of improvement — retrenchment, abolition of oppressive taxation, readjustment of imposts, removal of burdens, abolishment of sinecures, renunciation of exclusive privileges, and extension of popular rights. Much still remains, doubtless, to be done; but it will not be the worse, nor even perhaps the slower done in the end, if, following as heretofore the course of opinion, the existing evils are dealt with one by one, and England's only revolutions be those of public opinion, springing healthfully from such wise moderation, as in the case of Catholic Emancipation, the Reform Bill, Protection, and Free Trade, have ended in carrying the conviction of their wisdom or their necessity to the minds of all; and so rendering each a reform thoroughly matured, and a progressive step finally gained. Progress, and not revolution, must indeed be the watchword of every well-wisher to his country. The history of the revolutions of Europe during the first half of the present century seem to teach that even under the most defective forms of government, reform is safer, surer, and in every way better for the people, than revolution; and how much more indisputable must this be in a country where even its unreformed institutions have supplied the model of the freest governments in the world.] *

IN the foregoing chapters I have endeavoured to trace the rise and progress of the GREAT BRITISH PARTY OF REFORM, which, adopting such changes in principle and policy as experience may suggest, will live and grow till the privileges of the elective franchise and the burdens of taxation are impartially distributed among the people—till the sinecure and pension rolls are destroyed—till the public debt is paid—till the main reliance for home defence rests in the

* Editor.

healthful influence of peaceful intercourse and free trade with other nations—till the marine of a free commerce has superseded the “wooden walls” on the ocean—till traffic in the land is as free as in the wheat it grows—till the precepts of the law are made plain, and its administration cheap—till the dogmas of privileged and class interests, except in so far as they are recognised elements in the well-being of the state, shall exist only in the chronicles of history.

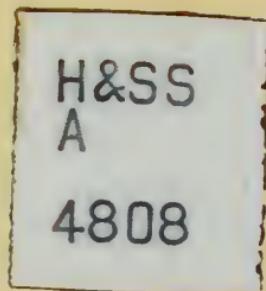
Since these sketches were commenced, Europe has been the theatre of a series of revolutions and counter-revolutions. France rose, overthrew the monarchy, and expelled Louis Philippe, and then thrust aside Lamartine, to make room for Louis Napoleon. Austria and Prussia kindled a flame which, for a time, gladdened the eye of Liberty. The expiring embers have been trodden out by the hoof of the Cossack. Rome expelled her dictator, and founded a republic more glorious and free than that of antiquity. She died under assassin blows dealt across the Alps by a professedly fraternal hand. Hungary made a stand for freedom which electrified the world. Her immortal Kossuth and Bem have been compelled to flee to the mountains, while the hordes of Russia lay waste her plains, and Austria, the meanest of despots, rivets chains on the limbs of her sons; and the one now rests in his exiled Turkish grave, while the other has sought shelter in England—the old refuge of the political exile. From this dark and dreary prospect, the eye turns to the Reformers of Great Britain and Ireland. Acting through free institutions, they will, by slow but sure advances, yet work out for themselves, and by the aid of kindred spirits in other countries, for Europe, the great problem of constitutional liberty. In the present aspect of Continental affairs, they must be regarded as the rallying point, the forlorn hope, of the struggling masses from the Gulf of Finland to the Straits of Gibraltar.



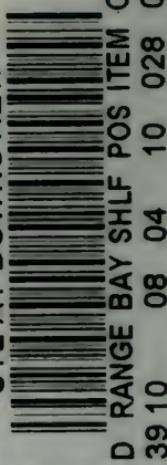
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